



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 136 • NUMBER 021 • 2nd SESSION • 36th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 16, 1999

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

OFFICIAL REPORT

In the November 15, 1999 issue of *Hansard* the passage at line 5 from the bottom of the left-hand column at page 1252 should read:

“the East Timorese. That is the real issue, not going on the kind of wild goose chases the—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.”

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 16, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

PRIVILEGE

MEMBER FOR QUÉBEC EAST—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: On Monday, November 1, 1999, the hon. member for Québec East raised a question of privilege concerning the breach of his privileges in relation to a civil suit launched against him by a senator who accused him of distributing defamatory material.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the hon. member for raising the matter. I also want to acknowledge and thank the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the opposition House leader, the Progressive Conservative House leader, the Bloc Québécois House leader and whip of the Bloc Québécois for their contributions on this matter.

The hon. member indicated that a lawsuit was launched against him by a senator following the distribution to his constituents of a bulk mailing of 16 pages on the subject of the Senate. His question of privilege concerned the involvement of the Senate in the lawsuit and the belief that this involvement was an aggressive act against the House of Commons and a breach of his privilege of freedom of speech as an elected member of this House. He alleged that there had been direct or indirect involvement of the Senate in the lawsuit and that this constituted an attack on the authority and dignity of the House of Commons.

There are a number of things that I wish to deal with at this time. First, I want to underline that I will make no comment on the civil case that is now before the courts since this would be inappropriate and not in keeping with our longstanding practices. Second, I do not believe that the Speaker should comment on decisions the Board of Internal Economy may or may not have taken. I am sure that all members will appreciate and understand that the House is

certainly not a court of appeal for decisions taken by that body. Indeed, while questions can be addressed to the Board of Internal Economy representatives during question period, the House through the Parliament of Canada Act, has mandated the Board of Internal Economy as the final authority in these matters.

[*English*]

I will however comment on the contention that the hon. member's parliamentary privilege of freedom of speech has been breached. Erskine May suggests on page 143 of the 20th edition that:

It would be vain to attempt an enumeration of every act which might be construed into a contempt, the power to punish for contempt being in its nature discretionary. . . It may be stated generally that any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt, even though there is no precedent of the offence.

[*Translation*]

Any attempt to intimidate a member with a view to influencing his or her parliamentary conduct is a breach of privilege. Let me reiterate for all members that privilege is a fundamental principle of parliamentary law.

[*English*]

In the 22nd edition of Erskine May, page 65, parliamentary privilege is defined as:

—the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions, and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals.

[*Translation*]

The position put forward by the hon. member for Québec East suggests that the senator has made an explicit effort to intimidate him by limiting his freedom of speech.

• (1010)

As all hon. members know, the privilege of freedom of speech is so fundamental that this House could not discharge its constitutional duties without it. May goes on to state in the 19th edition that, "Freedom of Speech is a privilege essential to every free council or legislature".

Routine Proceedings

All members must realize, however, that there are very real limits to parliamentary privilege. Speaker Jerome, when speaking on the limits of parliamentary privilege in his ruling of February 20, 1975 added:

The consequences of extending that definition of privilege to innumerable areas outside this chamber into which the work of an MP might carry him, and particularly to the great number of grievances he might encounter in the course of that work, would run contrary to the basic concept of privilege.

Let me stress that, in order to have a breach of the hon. member's privileges, the matter complained of must be directly related to a proceeding in parliament. If a member is indeed subjected to threats and intimidation, he or she is clearly hindered in the fulfilment of the parliamentary responsibilities for which he or she was elected.

The crucial question that must be determined is "What constitutes proceedings in parliament?"

[*English*]

Erskine May in the 19th edition, at page 87, characterizes "proceedings of parliament" in the following manner:

An individual Member takes part in a proceeding usually by speech, but also by various recognized kinds of formal action, such as voting, giving notice of a motion, etc., or presenting a petition or a report from a Committee, most of such actions being time-saving substitutes for speaking.

[*Translation*]

Joseph Maingot clearly states on page 315 of his book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, and I quote:

It may be pointed out that in regard to this privilege, a Member's privilege of freedom of speech concerns speaking in the House or Assembly or in a committee. In addition, the Member is also protected when carrying out those duties, as a Member of the House, that have a nexus with a parliamentary proceeding. However, when the Member performs such duties to his constituents and his party the fulfilment of which do not involve a parliamentary proceeding, the Member is not so protected.

I believe that my predecessor, Speaker Fraser, stated matters succinctly on June 10, 1993:

What a Member says outside the House about anyone is subject to the laws of the land relating to libel or slander as it would be for any other Canadian—if indeed the comments are actionable. What Members say in the Chamber, however, is protected by privilege.

Although I view the types of charges raised by the hon. member with great importance, my role as Speaker is limited to dealing strictly with breaches of privilege that occur during proceedings in parliament. In the words of Joseph Maingot on page 105 in his book *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*:

It is necessary for something to be said or done in the transaction of a "proceeding in Parliament" before the Member has Parliamentary immunity.

Since the incident referred to concerns information contained in a document distributed by the hon. member to his constituents, it is quite clear that this did not take place during proceedings in parliament and is therefore not protected by privilege.

In addition, with respect to the complaint the hon. member for Quebec East has against the senator, I must underline that the House has no authority over the Senate. In the 22nd edition of May, on page 149 it is stated and I quote:

Since the two Houses are wholly independent of each other, neither House can claim, much less exercise, any authority over a Member or officer of the other, and thus cannot punish any breach of privilege or contempt offered to it by such Member or officer. If a complaint is made against a Member or officer of the other House, the appropriate course of action is to examine the facts and then lay a statement of the evidence before the House of which the person complained of is a Member or officer.

• (1015)

For the reasons stated above, I must rule that the matter does not constitute a prima facie case of privilege, nor a contempt of parliament.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Human Resources Development and pursuant to Standing Order 109, I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, the government's response to the recommendations of the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Beyond the Numbers: The Future of the Social Insurance Number System in Canada".

* * *

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(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-317, an act to change the name of the electoral district of Lac-Saint-Jean.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to table a bill to change the name of the riding of Lac-Saint-Jean to Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

On polling, 70% of my constituents were in favour of changing the name so the Saguenay portion of my riding could be represented in the riding's name.

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

* * *

[English]

APPRENTICESHIP NATIONAL STANDARDS ACT

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-318, an act to require the establishment of national training and certification standards for trades that receive apprenticeship training.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the objective of this bill is to establish national training and certification standards for all apprenticeship trades. It would improve labour mobility and, I believe, encourage our young people to take up apprentice occupations at a time when there is a real shortage in the construction industry.

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

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among House leaders of the parties and I think you would find consent for adoption of the following motion dealing with speaking times for today's debate. The motion is in the same form as that passed for the same purpose at earlier sessions. I move:

That, during today's sitting the member proposing a motion on an allotted day shall not speak for more than twenty minutes, following which, a period not exceeding ten minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto, and immediately thereafter a representative of each of the recognized parties, other than that of the member proposing the motion, may be recognized to speak for not more than ten minutes, following which, in each case, a period not exceeding five minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto.

• (1020)

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

NATIONAL DRUG STRATEGY

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present. The first deals with drugs in our society and is attempting to register concern in the House of Commons concerning drugs.

The petitioners ask parliament to develop a co-ordinated national drug strategy that works effectively at the street level, funded fully to ensure that those addicted receive the necessary health care and rehabilitative treatment, and that those who sell and traffic drugs be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

TAXATION

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a second petition which calls upon parliament to give Canadian taxpayers a break by instituting tax relief of at least 25% in federal taxes over the next two years, starting with the next federal budget.

ST. JOHN'S HARBOUR

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on behalf of 75 people from the city of St. John's. The petitioners wish to draw the attention of the House to the polluted condition of St. John's Harbour.

The petitioners request that the House encourage the federal, provincial and relevant municipal governments to financially support the sewage treatment system required for the St. John's Harbour cleanup.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my pleasure to present petitions today on various issues.

The first petition contains over 1,000 names of people from my riding who call upon parliament to invoke the notwithstanding clause to ensure that we have a law against child pornography in Canada.

THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is also from my riding. The petitioners call upon parliament to ensure that parliament retain the supremacy of God within the charter of rights and freedoms.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls upon parliament to recognize the traditional

Routine Proceedings

definition of marriage as the union of a single man and a single woman.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 500 names on the fourth petition. The petitioners ask parliament to affirm the right of parents to discipline their children as they so choose, so long as they do not overstep the traditional bounds, and they call upon parliament to retain section 43 of the criminal code as it is currently worded.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour of presenting a petition signed by concerned citizens of the greater Toronto area.

Canada is a multicultural country and immigrants greatly contribute to multiculturalism in Canada. For a person who is in desperate need to sponsor their family, it is impossible for him or her to pay the \$500 processing fee, plus an additional \$975 landing fee per person.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon parliament to ask the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to review the existing fee structure and combine the landing fee and the processing fee into one, eliminating the other and lowering it to \$500 per applicant.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 5 and 32.

[Text]

Question No. 5—**Mr. Jim Pankiw:**

With respect to Order in Council No. 11 passed on November 29, 1994 declaring a series of firearms as prohibited weapons effective January 1, 1995, what has the government determined to be: (a) the total number and type of firearms confiscated under OIC No. 11; (b) the total number and type of firearms confiscated for which compensation was given to the owner; (c) the rationale or reason behind the issuance of such compensation; (d) the total number and type of firearms confiscated for which compensation was not given to the owner; and (e) the rationale or reason why no such compensation was provided?

Mr. John Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): It should first be noted that the firearms which were declared prohibited weapons under Order No. 11, SOR/94-744 were not all appropriated but some were in fact voluntarily handed over by their owners. Owners who did not voluntarily turn over their firearms were not eligible for any payment.

(a) 60 firearms in total: 19 American Arms AP9, 12 Benelli M1 Super 90, 2 Benelli M3 Super 90, 3 Claridge Hi-Tec, 1 Enfield MP-45, 3 Franchi Spas 12, 3 Franchi Spas 15, 1 Grendel P30, 1 Harrington & Richardson Premier, 1 Heckler and Koch Super 90, 1 Heckler and Koch SP89, 1 Inland Man. Div. M-2 Carbine, 9 Interdynamic KG99, 1 Intratec Tec-22, 1 Intratec Tec-9, and 1 Sten Mark II.

(b) 47 firearms in total, for which compensation was given to owners: 17 American Arms AP9, 11 Benelli M1 Super 90, 2 Benelli M3 Super 90, 3 Claridge Hi-Tec, 1 Franchi Spas 12, 2 Franchi Spas 15, 1 Grendel P30, 1 Heckler and Koch Super 90, and 9 Interdynamics KG99.

(c) A letter was sent to firearms owners by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to notify them that their firearms had been declared prohibited weapons under Order No. 11, SOR/94-744. The letter advised them to voluntarily hand over their weapons to the authorities and that they would be eligible for compensation for firearms returned voluntarily. In order to receive compensation owners were also required to do the following: sign a notice of waiver; provide their surname, given name, date of birth, address and telephone number; provide the make, model and serial number of the returned firearm; and indicate the month and year in which the firearm was acquired.

(d) 13 firearms in total without compensation to owners: 2 American Arms AP9, 1 Benelli M1 Super 90, 1 Enfield MP-45, 2 Franchi Spas 12, 1 Franchi Spas 15, 1 Harrington & Richardson Premier, 1 Heckler and Koch SP89, 1 Inland Man. Div. M-2 Carbine, 1 Intratec Tec-22, 1 Intratec Tec-9, and 1 Sten Mark II.

(e) The following are reasons for lack of compensation: 2 of these firearms were seized and there was a destruction order from the court; 8 of these firearms were not listed in Order No. 11, SOR/94-744; 7 of these firearms were already prohibited, 2 under section 84 of the Criminal Code and 1 is a restrictive weapon; and 3 files are still pending.

Question No. 32—**Mr. John Cummins:**

Has the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, when considering cases from veterans claiming that mefloquine use was a contributing cause of their disability, ever: (a) declined to hear further evidence from veterans deployed to Somalia detailing medical problems relating to mefloquine use amongs soldiers; (b) declined to recognize that a veteran had suffered a disability related to mefloquine use in either Somalia or Rwanda because it had no evidence from the Canadian Forces showing that the veteran had complained of mefloquine side effects while in Somalia; (c) found that mefloquine was not a contributing factor in a disability suffered by a veteran who had been deployed to either Somalia or Rwanda; (d) found it had no evidence of mefloquine use by veterans who been deployed to Somalia; (e) found it had no evidence of side effects from mefloquine use by veterans who had been deployed to Somalia; (f) found it had no evidence to indicate that mefloquine caused emotional problems that would affect decision making capabilities of veterans who had been deployed to Somalia; (g) dismissed a claim from a veteran deployed to Somalia on the basis that emotional problems resulting from mefloquine only occur in situations where it is being used in the treatment of malaria and not for the prevention of malaria; (h) found it had no evidence to indicate that mefloquine caused suicidal ideation in veterans who had been deployed to Somalia or Rwanda; and in each case, if so, what measures were taken to ensure

that the board had received all available data from the Canadian Forces and the Health Protection Branch of Health Canada?

Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.): The Veterans Review and Appeal Board advises that it adjudicated over 49,000 cases in the past five years and does not track the nature of the evidence presented in support of claims. As such, the board cannot respond with certainty about what evidence may or may not have been given to the board in the course of a specific appeal. Recently a case where there was some evidence concerning the drug mefloquine on file was the subject of a federal court judicial review. The federal court referred the case back to the board to be redecided in accordance with the instruction of the court on how the board must interpret the pension Act. The only issue before the board was an issue of statutory interpretation. No additional evidence was necessary in order to render a fully favourable decision. The appellant's representative was advised of this and a decision was issued.

The board obeyed the directions of the federal court. At three hearings before this board and the former Canadian Pension Commission and one hearing before the federal court, this appellant was represented by lawyers from the Bureau of Pensions Advocates. The appellant, who at all stages had legal counsel, decided what evidence to place before the board in support of the claim.

[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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1025)

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—FOOD INDUSTRIES

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC) moved:

That this House regrets the failure of the government to recognize the importance of Canada's food industries:

(a) by failing to provide leadership, a long-term vision and workable solutions for Canada's fishery and agriculture sectors;

Supply

(b) by not adequately preparing for the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v Marshall* which acknowledged fishing, hunting and gathering rights for Canada's aboriginal Peoples; and

(c) by failing to address the serious problems of Canada's agricultural producers, who are suffering from increasing subsidized competition, rising input costs, natural and economic disasters, and an inadequate long-term national safety net, the result of which has contributed greatly to increased financial and mental stresses on family farms and in fishing communities;

and, therefore, this House urges the government to give consideration to the immediate and long-term needs of Canada's agriculture and fishing industries.

He said: Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would ask the Chair to recognize that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from West Nova, who will be speaking to the issue of fisheries. I will be speaking to the issue of agriculture.

I am very pleased to stand today and present the motion on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party. The motion points to the failure of the federal government over the past six years to properly manage Canada's resource based industries, fisheries and agriculture, and to give them the priority they deserve.

This motion is about more than simply agriculture and fisheries, although we will use those as the examples, and certainly bad examples as demonstrated by the government.

The motion speaks to the lack of the ability of the government to manage. It speaks to the lack of leadership and vision, not only for agriculture and fisheries, but also the quality of life for Canadians who reside in rural communities throughout this great country of ours.

It speaks to the inability of the government to put forward the understanding that these areas of our economy are vital and important to Canadians. Our natural resources, particularly agriculture and fisheries, but also forestry and mining, have been the backbone of the country over the last century. They have been dropped down on the priority list to where it has almost been negligence on behalf of the government not to identify these areas as having a higher priority.

The federal government has failed to recognize the importance of our food industries. It has failed to provide clear direction, leadership, long term vision and workable solutions for our fishery and agriculture sectors.

The government has an opportunity today in debate in the House to finally show that it will be committed to the immediate and long term needs of Canada's agriculture and fishing industries. The government has been noticeably absent in its commitment over the past six years.

I will speak with some authority on the agriculture industry. I will begin today's debate speaking to that area.

Supply

There is a simple reality. Farm families and rural communities across Canada are paying a very high price for having a Liberal government unchallenged and uncaring in Ottawa. There is a long pattern of neglect, but the past few years have shown just how dramatically issues of importance to rural Canada have fallen off the government's agenda.

The family farm is a way of life. Food production is a source of life. The two are interconnected and the survival of both is fundamental to the well-being of every Canadian. The federal government must act now to maintain the viability of Canadian farms and Canadian fishing industries in villages throughout the country.

It is time the Liberal government realized that agriculture is important to this country as a supplier of the best food in the world.

• (1030)

The United States and the European Union have identified agriculture as being a priority in the support systems that have been set up to make sure that farms are retained within their societies. Our government has not done so. I would like to hear what it believes the future of these two vital industries will be having been neglected for the past six years.

Agriculture is one of the most efficient industries in Canada. Our reputation in the world is strong. We have 10% of the world's farmland. The growing globe will always need more to eat and will always find new ways to use agricultural products.

Canadian producers are in the best position to take advantage of this bright future. But if we fail to support our producers, if we fail to invest in agriculture and ensure its long term stability, that advantage will disappear. We will have to import foodstuffs in order to feed our population as opposed to depending on a reliable domestic food supply.

We need to recognize and emphasize the natural strength of this region. Canada has a rich future in value added industries if we develop the natural resources to which that value is added. One of the differences between the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservative Party is we understand that agriculture and natural resources are still the fundamental building blocks of our Canadian economy.

I would like to comment now on the Liberal government's lack of leadership in addressing this very important issue. The throne speech is one example of how void the government is when it comes to any long term vision for Canadian resource based industries. There was no reference to what the current government proposes to do to maintain a viable agriculture and agri-food sector while that sector continues to suffer through one of the worst financial crunches since the 1930s.

The throne speech was devoid of any recognition of the agricultural situation that we as Canadians now find ourselves in. That is an absolute shame. I do not know if that speaks to the government's philosophy or lack thereof or to the inability of the minister to get that priority to the cabinet table.

In the advent of our current government's sudden focus on technology as the wave of the future, it has unfortunately disregarded the fact that agriculture's sustainability remains one of the basic needs of any country in the world, particularly Canada. The agricultural sector in Canada is facing increasing subsidized competition, rising input costs, natural and economic disasters and an inadequate national safety net program while the government stands idle.

For example, for every \$1 farmers in Canada receive on a per capita basis, their competitors in the United States and in Europe receive more than \$2.50 in support from their governments. This does not include the \$8.6 billion farm aid package recently approved by the United States, a move that will double direct payments to farmers in that country this year.

In February 1993 the minister of agriculture stated when he was in opposition:

GRIP and NISA, which are long term safety net programs, are being tried and are being worked with. So far in many areas they have been insufficient. They have been a disappointment to the farmers and the industry.

That is a quote from *Hansard* in 1993.

It is safe to say that most farmers today would take GRIP and NISA over AIDA, the disastrous program that has been put forward by the Liberal government. GRIP and NISA had vision, had long term understanding as to the safety net project. The GRIP program was taken away by the government and not replaced by any long term safety net program.

It is also sad to see the minister of agriculture using desperate attempts to gain sympathy from the agriculture community for his dismal record. He talks of taking a tough love approach. Perhaps the minister would like to expand on the definition of a tough love approach. Does it mean that agriculture, farmers and producers in our country are to stand alone or fall together? Is that the tough love approach the minister wishes to take?

It is also sad to see the minister pit farmer against farmer. I will not quote what was reported in a newspaper recently, but the issue was that there were others in the farm community who did not want to bail out any of their counterparts in the industry. That is not true. From what I have seen and heard having talked with my producers on a regular basis, there is a collegiality among producers. They want to have a long term vision, a long term program, a long term viability and understanding of this industry. We have none of that.

• (1035)

I do not know if we are going to end up with 1,000 producers producing all that is necessary for domestic production. Is that where the government wishes to go? If it is, there is more than just farm production at risk. There is a quality of life and a way of life in rural Canada.

I am very proud to say that I come from a rural community, as does my colleague from West Nova who deals with the fishery. I deal with agriculture. It is a way of life. It is the way that we live, a quality of life that we wish to retain. That vision, that understanding, that philosophy and that ideology has to be put forward in programs and must be accepted by the government of the day. If the government of the day cannot develop those programs, be assured that the next government under the Progressive Conservative Party will understand that, as did the previous Conservative government in 1993. The next government will put forward those programs, that vision, that philosophy and the ideology that will support rural Canada as opposed to destroying it.

I will now acquiesce to my colleague from West Nova to deal with the issue of aquaculture and fisheries.

Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great regret and a deep sense of frustration that I rise before the House to denounce the government's failure to adequately respond to the growing crisis that exists within our rural areas which depend almost exclusively on Canada's food industries to earn their livelihoods.

The PC Party has consistently called upon the government to act in the best interests of our farmers and fishers, yet our calls for assistance have basically fallen upon deaf ears. Our party is using our supply day motion to once again draw the attention of the government to the economic hardships that exist within our farming and fishing communities. The farm crisis in our western provinces and the recent crisis in the Atlantic fishery are prime examples of the government's failure to address the growing crisis in these two primary industries.

In his remarks, my hon. colleague from Brandon—Souris effectively identified the serious problems facing our western farmers. Without an adequate long term federal aid program, many of our western farmers will be facing economic ruin. Despite numerous pleas for help from my hon. colleague along with those coming from the premiers of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the federal government, in particular its minister of agriculture, has simply introduced a band-aid solution that will do little to ensure the long term survival of our prairie farmers.

Perhaps overshadowed during the whole debate has been the equally serious crisis facing our Nova Scotia farmers. After three consecutive seasons of drought conditions, they find themselves

Supply

wondering whether they will have a future for themselves and their families in this industry.

The AIDA program looked at the last three years to determine if there would be a benefit. The farmers who live in my constituency have been experiencing drought conditions for the last three years, but they have been unable to get any benefits from the AIDA program. That is only one of the issues and one of the examples of what is facing our farmers in southwestern Nova Scotia. That is not acceptable. What is being produced by these farmers is valuable not just from a food point of view but as an economic benefit as well.

Many Canadians are alarmed by the constant brain drain that is occurring in this country. There has been a continuous exodus of some of Canada's finest young minds who see a better future for themselves in the U.S. This situation is having a profound effect on our farming community. Our youth must see a future for themselves within the farming industry, yet this will only happen if the government starts to take the problem facing our farming industry seriously.

I do not think anything could epitomize more the government's lack of leadership than its recent handling of the supreme court decision in the Donald Marshall Jr. case. Despite having years to prepare for any consequences the supreme court decision would have, we sadly witnessed a total lack of understanding of this situation by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans who was undoubtedly misguided and ill prepared to respond to the fear and anger that accompanied the court decision.

• (1040)

Why the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans was not prepared to immediately respond to the Donald Marshall decision continues to baffle everyone involved in the industry. It is beyond all comprehension why the minister failed to have a plan in place that would have responded to the decision. Now the minister would argue that he was prepared and that he did have a solution in hand, but the facts would tend to show otherwise.

The Supreme Court of Canada released its decision on September 17 yet the minister only released a statement on September 20, which in effect says he did not know he had to study it. For three days there were no comments. Obviously native fishers were more prepared for the decision than the minister as they began setting lobster traps almost immediately following the decision.

While tensions in Atlantic Canada continued to rise as a result of the supreme court decision, the minister of fisheries continued to reassure us that a solution was in hand. On October 1 he announced that he would seek a short term deal with the native community for a moratorium that would not rule out acting unilaterally if a decision was not reached. The chiefs acted on their own without the

Supply

minister's assistance and introduced their own moratorium, which in most instances was maintained throughout the crisis.

Native chiefs, like our fisheries representatives, recognized the inability of the minister to show any kind of leadership in the dispute. Even the Prime Minister recognized the seriousness of the situation when he suggested that the government could ask the supreme court to suspend its decision. Obviously he realized that his minister of fisheries had fumbled the ball on this very serious issue and was looking for a way out of a very tense situation that was threatening to erupt into violence in the Atlantic provinces.

The Prime Minister and his Minister of Fisheries and Oceans openly disagreed regarding the solution to the Atlantic fishery crisis. If native and non-native fishers were looking for any type of leadership following the supreme court decision, they quickly realized that they were not going to find it within the ranks of the federal government.

On October 15 the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced the appointment of Mr. James MacKenzie to negotiate an agreement that would allow native and non-native fishers to share the resource. Almost a full month after the decision we discovered that the only solution that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans had in response to the crisis was to appoint an independent negotiator. If this was the best the minister could offer, why did he not appoint this individual immediately following the ruling? Why did he only act following unfortunate acts of violence?

Native and non-native leaders within my constituency deserve much credit for coming to a temporary agreement over the fishery in lobster fishing area 34. They recognized that the government was either ill prepared, or even worse, did not care what happened to the fishery. They agreed to solve the problems themselves and they deserve much credit for reducing the tensions that exist in our area.

It is obvious that the minister of fisheries has no idea how to resolve the fisheries crisis and now he appoints Mr. MacKenzie to try to defuse the growing tension among native and non-native groups. Unfortunately he failed to provide Mr. MacKenzie with any terms of reference. It was almost seven weeks before Mr. MacKenzie's terms of reference were made public. That again shows the total lack of preparedness.

Why should the industry respect anything that comes out of the minister's mouth when he continues to show his total ineptitude in handling the situation? The minister of fisheries continues to say that this situation can only be resolved through consultation. I agree, but what is consultation worth if the minister refuses to listen to any of it?

For instance, over the last few years the minister has been threatening to increase the size of lobster to protect stocks. Our

fishery representatives have agreed to do V-notching instead until such time and further scientific evidence can show that this system is not effective. The minister has yet to agree to this request but instead appears willing to put further hardship on our fishers by unilaterally imposing an increased lobster size. Now our fishers are faced with an increase in the number of fishers plus an increase in the size of lobsters which could result in a serious decline in revenue.

The lobster fishery is vital to our local economy as is our farming industry. It is time that our government began recognizing the importance of the food industry to the overall economy before it is too late.

I would like to conclude my remarks by moving an amendment to the opposition motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by adding after the word "provide" the following: "strong".

• (1045)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the amendment.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for my colleague for West Nova who has been and will continue to be very involved in the fisheries issue, particularly as it now unfolds with the Marshall decision.

We do not need to look too far in the distant future to know that perhaps at some point in time the minister of fisheries will have a position of power. Knowing full well what was going on in the supreme court with respect to Marshall, would my colleague have tried to put into place some planning, some strategy for best case and worst case scenarios? Or, would he simply have done what the government has done and wait until all this unfolded with no strategy and no plan?

If so, how would he have seen this play out as opposed to having the violence that we have seen and the inability of government to negotiate after the fact? What would he have seen as a better resolution to the issue?

That speaks directly to the motion: the lack of management, the inability to be able to put forward plans and to mitigate issues and situations which have happened in the past with respect to fisheries, agriculture, port disputes, lumber disputes, pork disputes and beef disputes. We have had them all. How would my hon. colleague have tried to come up with something better as a strategy or plan than what happened?

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy my hon. colleague asked that question. I do not know if it is my involvement some years ago with the Boy Scout movement or if it is my personal way of doing things from my business background, but I like knowing or at least being prepared for what is coming, be it good or bad. I always try to prepare.

Supply

It is for this reason that I just cannot fathom why the minister of fisheries was not prepared. He said that it could have gone many ways. There were two obvious ways that it could have gone: either the decision was in favour of Donald Marshall or it was not.

If it were in favour of Donald Marshall there were things that could have been done. He could have been prepared. He could have come down to the affected areas and said that they had a plan, that they were working with both sides, that they would work with them and iron out some kind of solution at least in the long term so they could work toward a longer term solution to the problem. Had it gone the other side, the native community would have had some concerns. Obviously negotiations would have been needed there.

However, there was none of that. There was no preparedness. It took seven weeks to show the terms of reference for the negotiator, almost a month to appoint a negotiator, and three days to make an initial announcement on the decision. That is total unpreparedness. It is not acceptable and this is ongoing.

• (1050)

I was speaking with a friend shortly after the decision came down. I said it blew me away that the government did not have a solution in place. He said that was how it was, that there was never a solution, only band-aids one after another.

That is not a solution. There has to be one. We need a government that thinks forward, not just puts out the fires as they happen.

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I point out to my colleague on the opposite side that the supreme court decision with respect to Marshall was a divided decision. There was a minority of the judges that ruled in entirely the opposite.

I would like to ask him that had the Marshall issue been an issue before parliament instead of before the supreme court, how would he have come down. Would he have come down on the side of the majority decision of the judges, that is to extend the rights to the aboriginals over the lobster fishery, or would he have come down on the side of the minority which said that this was not appropriate? How would he have voted had this been an issue before parliament?

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. I respect the spirit in which it was asked, but I think there is a clear difference between what the government did and what this party would do.

We would not have had this decision go to the supreme court but would have dealt with the issue in parliament so that it could have been debated. Then we would have gone back to the parties involved and negotiated a settlement. We would not have put it in the hands of the supreme court.

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate today and to provide some of the details of the government's response to the serious financial situation facing many Canadian farmers today.

I do not want to diminish or underestimate the level of the crisis for a number of producers in Canada today, but I do want to say as well that overall our agriculture and agrifood sector is strong. It is and will continue to make a major contribution to the Canadian economy.

This past year, however, has not been easy for many producers. We understand that very fully. They have been struggling against a number of things. They have been struggling against low commodity prices that are in effect around the world. They have been struggling because of the fallout of the Asian economy and some of the markets that have been lost there. They have been struggling because of those reduced markets. They have been struggling because of excessive moisture in some cases and in others lack of moisture in certain parts of the country. All these issues have combined to have a serious impact on the economies of many producers, particularly those in the grain, oilseed and hog industries.

However under the government's leadership, and with the co-operation of the provincial governments and farm organizations, we have come together to respond to the situation.

I remind the House and Canadians again that about a year ago the hon. member for Brandon—Souris and his party were recommending that the government should come to the assistance of Canadian farmers to the extent of \$276 million, I believe it was. I remind the House that the government has come to the assistance of producers in a number of ways, one of which has been \$1.07 billion or close to \$1.1 billion to assist producers, which is just about four times what the hon. member's party said it would give. Thank goodness it is not in power, but I think we understand why.

Those members can say all they want, but I remind everybody of the situation in 1993 when their party ended its reign of terror and left Canada taking in \$120 billion a year and spending \$162 billion a year, the largest single deficit in the history of Canada. We were for all technical purposes bankrupt because of nine years in which they were in power, adding to a situation they took over but a situation they promised Canadians they would fix but only made considerably worse.

• (1055)

The member for West Nova made reference to the fact that farmers in Nova Scotia had been suffering from drought for two or three years. Shortly after I became minister I reminded the producers and the government there that a crop insurance program

Supply

needed to be in place to assist in the forage industry, for example. They did not do that when they had the first drought. They did not do that when they had the second drought. Now they are working on it and I praise them for it. They have now had three years of experience in that regard. It shows a lack of understanding by hon. members in that some of these matters are under the control of the provinces, and I assume the hon. member is encouraging the provincial government in that province.

The member for Brandon—Souris also made comments with reference to GRIP. GRIP was not all bad and was not all good, but I ask him to ask some of the provinces like the province of Saskatchewan why they cancelled GRIP. This is one of the reasons, and not the only one, that a number of farmers in Saskatchewan are in very grave difficulty. Other provinces kept a portion or a GRIP-type program which has been working very well for them.

In February of this year our government moved to aid Canadian farmers by putting in place the agriculture income disaster program. That program is funded 60% by the federal government and 40% by the provincial government. The first announcement on the program will support Canadian farmers with contributions to the extent of \$1.5 billion in addition to the \$1 billion per year in safety net programs already in place. That took place after extensive consultations with the National Safety Nets Advisory Committee made up of representatives of all major farm commodities. That announcement was made last year.

In early November of this year we made an additional announcement of another \$170 million from the 60% federal portion. We made some further changes to assist, to deepen and to broaden the coverage of the program, bringing the total federal support close to \$1.1 billion.

We are encouraging the provinces to join in the standard 60:40 support to the program. That has taken place over the years and has become accepted by everyone. We are telling the provinces that if they do not wish to put it forward to support the aid program they can do it with equivalent measures. We presume and expect that relationship will continue.

I admit the AIDA program may not be perfect but it has proven to help many Canadian farmers withstand the crisis they are facing. Over 51,000 applications have been received. More than \$370 million have been paid out so far for 1998.

I assure the House and Canadian farmers that the total money will be paid out. We have made changes to ensure that. If necessary, we will continue to make changes to the program to ensure that. I do know and admit that the money did not flow as quickly as we all would like it to. There are applications which have to take place so that we can direct the money to those who need it. I also assure members that in the very near future the remainder of the money for 1998 will be paid out.

For example, in Saskatchewan to date over 8,000 farmers have received over \$80 million. I should add that if the province agrees to participate in covering the changes that we made recently to negative margins, over the two years of the program our estimates are that it will move to about \$585 million to assist producers in the province of Saskatchewan alone.

• (1100)

I should also mention other changes we have made in response to the comments of the safety nets advisory committee. They include changes to the reference period, to how we treat family labour, to the choice of accounting system and I could go on. We have also made changes to the advance payments so that farmers can, at this time, apply for 60% of their anticipated requirement for 1999 so that we can get them more cash to help them.

This past summer we made access easier and faster to crop insurance. We made changes to the NISA program so that withdrawals from and deposits to are improved. As a result, over 41,000 more Canadian farmers have access to that fund, and I could go on. That made available another \$117 million.

I remind everyone that there are still, for example, in the province of Saskatchewan, over 26,000 farmers who have triggered withdrawals from the NISA program as a result of their 1998 business year, and there is over \$280 million still available. I encourage them to participate in that program.

I could go on but I will sum up by saying that we have continued and we will continue to support our farmers with effective and flexible safety nets. We will continue to work with them and for them to find additional ways to support and strengthen rural agricultural Canada and rural Canada in general.

We will continue the dialogue with the provinces and the farm groups. We will be working with them to put in place a longer term agricultural disaster assistance program, one that will work effectively and invaluablely with the NISA program, crop insurance program and all other programs at the present time. I am confident that we can work with the sector to strengthen and improve the agriculture in rural Canada.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great opportunity to be able to question a government minister on any issue, and especially one of the importance that our farmers have been experiencing throughout the country, whether it was a commodity issue that took place last year or the farm income crisis which they have currently.

My question to the hon. minister is quite simple. When it comes to hog farmers in the province of New Brunswick, and I am speaking primarily about the ones in my riding, they are very clear in terms of having a long range program for disaster relief and in

terms of what AIDA is filling as a stop gap to complement NISA. Would the minister now say that the abolition of the GRIP program was a clear and utter mistake?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief: Mr. Speaker, there were a number of programs in the past that were discussed by all sectors of the industry. At one time the pork industry was involved in a national tripartite stabilization program. Over the years it was discussed that some changes could be made to that. As the hon. member said, a GRIP program was put in. It was basically a whole farm program that was there.

The bottom line is that for a number of reasons, some because of the industry itself, some because of the way in which the provinces felt about the program, and yes, some because of discussions with the federal government, some of these programs have been changed. That is why we are looking at a full analysis and a review of the safety net programs that are there and a long term program to put in place to assist producers over a long term period.

There may be very well be benefits carried forward from some of the thoughts and ideas in the GRIP program. It too was not perfect. If it had been perfect it would still be there. The bottom line is that because it was not what everybody wanted, there have been some changes as we see today.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding there are a number of farmers who have applied for AIDA. Very few, if any, that I know of have received any funding. Most of them have been denied. Many have come to my office with the forms and I can honestly say that I have never seen such complicated, ridiculous types of forms that farmers are expected to fill in to accomplish this task of making an application.

• (1105)

I have an accounting degree and I can understand why accountants are having such severe problem with it. Why is the government making this so complicated for the average farmer? Why is it using, according to Stats Canada, 1997 stats in order to make decisions regarding AIDA? This is 1999. Why are we using dated stats to deny farmers this support?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief: Mr. Speaker, the requests from the provincial governments and the industry beginning about a year ago was that there needed to be some support to recognize the precipitous drops in incomes, particularly those in the grains and hog industries, relative to the three previous years 1997, 1996 and 1995.

I have reminded the House before that the forms that the hon. member is referring to are, yes, seven pages long. I will not go into them, but they ask farmers to give beginning inventory, ending inventory, expenses, income, accounts receivable, et cetera.

Supply

As a government, we have a responsibility. The hon. member and his party often remind us of the responsibility we have in the way in which we expend taxpayers' money. We said, the industry said and the provinces said that they wanted the resources available targeted to those who were in need.

The program that was put in place supported and supports someone if their gross margin drops below 70% of what their gross margin had averaged for the three previous years. I can only assume that the individuals who came in to see the hon. member did not trigger the criteria of gross margins being below 70% of what they had averaged for the three previous reference years.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have one clarification. The minister continually suggests that the proposed program that we came forward with and the \$276 million is in fact true. That was a federal contribution not inclusive of the provincial contributions. It was also six months prior to when this minister even realized that there was a problem.

I should also tell the House that it was tied into a long term program, which I am sure the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food would like to be able to say that he has it well in hand, but would he admit that it is not well in hand?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief: Mr. Speaker, it shows how up to date our party and our government is compared to the hon. member's party. He may have come forward with those figures but we came forward in the end with \$1.1 billion four times.

He knows full well that there are discussions going on in co-operation with the provinces, the safety nets advisory committee and the industry to put in place the long term safety net program. Yes, we do have it in hand. Yes, we are consulting with the industry. Yes, we will be taking direction and consultation with them as it should be.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is a pleasure to have the minister present today for the debate. Being the fine gentleman that he is, I am certain he would be pleased to stick around for another five minutes for an extension on questions. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House for that.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to extend the time for questions and comments to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief: Mr. Speaker, I do have to leave for a cabinet meeting, but if the members wish me to stay for five more minutes I will.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Supply

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion by the Progressive Conservative Party on the Liberal government's failure to recognize the importance of Canada's food industry.

In the three issues that will be put before the House today, I want to stress the second one, namely, that the government was not properly prepared for the "decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v Marshall*, which acknowledged fishing, hunting and gathering rights for Canada's aboriginal peoples". The peoples referred to are, specifically, the Malecite and the Mi'kmaq.

• (1110)

Looking at the events, it is true the Liberal government over there was not prepared to face the music. The proof is that the decision was brought down around the middle of September and the incidents with the native fishermen began only toward the end of September or the beginning of October.

During the hearings the Standing Committee on Fisheries started holding as soon as the House resumed in mid-October, we realized, when we heard what the aboriginal witnesses were saying, that they had approached the Canadian government many times. They had done so as early as last spring in order to be ready with a Plan B, if ever the Canadian government were to lose in court.

I also know that they did so during the summer, in order to still have the possibility of preparing a Plan B. The Canadian government rejected this each time, preferring to believe that only its version of the story would hold any weight. Now it has to be acknowledged that the Canadian government and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans have been left high and dry, one might say.

During last week's recess, there was another event that proved that the Canadian government is totally off track. Mr. Thériault was hired to assist Mr. MacKenzie in the negotiations, in order to provide the maritimes fishermen with representation in these negotiations, because the so-called traditional fishing communities did not feel that the chief negotiator was listening to and understanding them.

I might add that we only learned of the few lines defining the mandate of Mr. MacKenzie at the time of the announcement of his assistant's appointment. This indicates, once again, the extent of the government's lack of preparedness for the situation.

More serious in this situation is the fact that the minister is splitting the mandate to negotiate. The government is talking about trying to reach short term agreements with the aboriginal peoples

on fishing starting this winter and early spring to enable aboriginal fisher to get along with traditional fishers. This is a praiseworthy goal, but the short and the long term are being totally separated, and this fact is causing concern among the fishers.

I would like to clarify something here. The government wants to introduce new players into the lobster fishing industry, which is already quite full. There is no more room, and all the industry players agree that, if new fishers are to be brought in, others must be withdrawn.

I wonder, therefore, what meaning the short term agreements with the native bands have. Fishers deciding to pull out give their most valuable possession, their fishing site, to someone else. It is a vital part of them. Who would give away a vital part of one's self just like that, when told it is just for the short term? The example is perhaps a bit strong, but, when one gives part of one's self away, it can never be replaced. It is a bit like trying to put the toothpaste back in the tube.

An essentially irreversible process is under way. It is going to be very difficult for those fishers who voluntarily decide to return their licenses to Fisheries and Oceans to change their mind. On that basis, how will it be possible to reconcile the long term process the minister has initiated?

What I understand is that the Government of Canada is giving the Indian affairs minister the so called long term process, because, the Marshall decision, the decision by the supreme court that allows aboriginal peoples to exercise their fishing rights, provides that the fishing must be for a moderate livelihood, that fishing will enable the native bands to enjoy a moderate livelihood.

• (1115)

The supreme court does not define this expression. The report of the Erasmus-Dussault commission suggests some possible directions for the self-government so sought after by the first nations. Seeing the Canadian government's failure to govern when it comes to native affairs, the supreme court is giving it a little push from behind, so to speak, saying "You must ensure that native peoples have a decent livelihood, as seen through modern lenses". This is a new management expression.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has been tasked with forming a committee to look into the matter. The committee's long-term mandate contains no clues as to the nature of the short-term agreements to be worked out right now for the fishery.

For example, concerning the three things mentioned in the treaty, hunting, fishing and gathering, are we to understand that a decent livelihood, which remains to be defined by the committee led by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, will represent about 30%? Will it be 25%? What will it be?

Supply

Second, will the Canadian government attempt to resolve native concerns as much as possible insofar as the fishery is concerned? Since we have no information on the progress that has been made by the other committee, it is likely that the fishing community will be asked to do a bit more.

When I refer to being asked to do more, the aboriginal people started with what are called riparian fisheries, which require less equipment. I am referring to lobster fishing, although that is not the only catch in Canadian waters.

Are we to understand that other fisheries will also be invited to help by suggesting a quantity of fish or a financial value to determine what is a moderate livelihood?

All of these questions leave me highly perplexed. Does a moderate livelihood refer to the financial aspect or to the work? It must be very difficult to not have anything to occupy one's time, to have 24 hours a day, 7 days a week free. If it is only the financial aspect, what could be done within the existing management agreements with the fishermen?

Here again, I am sceptical. Is it up to one category of individuals, the fishers, to make reparation for all the historical mistakes made by Canada? The only way to do so would be through taxes, so that if ever licences were to be withdrawn on a voluntary basis, the Canadian taxpayers would know that they had to pay for part of the mistake, because Canadian and Quebec fishers will have to be compensated for having to withdraw in favour of the new players, the aboriginal fishers.

It is unfortunate that we have so little time this morning to address this subject. These few questions I have raised suggest to us a lack of preparedness on the part of the Canadian government. In my opinion, it is moving at a snail's pace in resolving this problem, when the aboriginal people have been knocking at the door for 240 years now. Since my time has run out, I will now accept any questions from the other side.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the Conservative supply day motion. It is an interesting motion which begins as follows: "That this House regrets the failure of the government to recognize the importance of Canada's food industries". There are several parts to it, all of which bear commenting upon.

First, the motion states that the government has failed to provide leadership, a long term vision and workable solutions for Canada's fishery and agricultural sectors. Second, it states that the government did not adequately prepare for the decision of the supreme court in the Marshall case which acknowledged the fishing, hunting

and gathering rights of Canada's aboriginal people. Third, it states what is perhaps most all encompassing and to which I will direct most of my comments, that the government has failed to address the serious problem of Canada's agricultural producers who are suffering from increased subsidized competition, rising input costs, natural and economic disasters and an inadequate long term national safety net, the result of which has contributed greatly to increased financial and mental stresses on family farms and fishing communities.

It is a welcome motion and I compliment my colleagues in the Conservative Party. Although sometimes we have our differences, on this motion it is interesting to see that there is some commonality and concern for the farming and fishing communities. The motion goes beyond that because the mover of the motion spoke about the natural resources industries. He talked about the mining industry, the forestry industry and rural communities.

Those are things about which all of us are concerned, in particular those of us who come from rural communities. Because of the crisis in the agricultural industry, my colleague from Palliser attempted to introduce on October 12 an emergency debate in the House to deal with the family farm and the crisis it was facing. He wrote to the Speaker requesting permission to have an emergency debate on the issue.

There is a crisis in the farming industry. There is a crisis in the fishing industry and there is a crisis in our rural communities that is simply not being addressed.

I ended my comments yesterday in the debate on the Cape Breton Development Corporation Act by talking about the four carved figures in the lobby of the House of Commons, the four faces which represent the people who built this nation, one of which is a farmer. Today in the prairies farmers are facing the worst crisis since the 1930s. We have said it over and over.

Why are they facing the crisis? Some of it is beyond our control, such as the natural weather conditions. It is certainly not because of a lack of industry. My grandfather was a farmer in Cape Breton. He used to say that even if a farmer intended to loaf the day away, he would get up in time to have an early start because that is the way farmers are. They get up early, they work hard and they plan their day because they have respect for their work. The carved face of the farmer in the lobby of the House of Commons is a testament to the importance that government once attributed to those who farmed in this country, in particular in the prairie provinces, but also in my part of the country, Cape Breton. There was a thriving farming community there not very long ago. My grandfather was a farmer a generation and a half ago.

Today farmers are suffering because of a lack of vision. The Conservative Party is right. For every dollar of wheat sold, the Canadian farmer now receives just 9 cents in subsidies, while

Supply

American farmers receive 38 cents in subsidies and European farmers receive even more. They collect 56 cents in subsidies. Given that absolutely unlevel playing field, is it any wonder that the family farm is in crisis in this country?

Because of that crisis the premiers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba came to Ottawa to seek help. Part of what this country is all about is an understanding that as one region in the country faces hard times the other regions of the country assist. It is a community. There is a sense that there is an interdependence, sometimes from the east to the west, sometimes from the west to the east. We give to each other when we can and how we can, like a family. Sadly, the two premiers from the western provinces returned to their provinces saying that they had gone to Ottawa, to the national government, their partner, to seek help and they were told to go home.

• (1125)

Premier Romanow said “We are the voice of moderation. We are the people who come to the government with an understanding of what it is like to have to make tough decisions”. He talked about national unity. Sometimes the government forgets that national unity is tied to many factors. When people in one region or community in the country feel that the national government really does not give a hoot about their problem, it does not bode well for participation in a civil society, which is what we need if we are to enhance and move forward on the issue of national unity. That is why Premier Romanow made those remarks and that is why I echo them today.

In light of the debate we had yesterday, the federal government, centred in Ottawa, has turned its back on the mining communities in Cape Breton. That will not bode well when the federal government comes looking for support for national unity on the east coast.

When the farmers in the west and the east, who once had vibrant, thriving industries, look to the federal government for support and the support is not there, they have to question, when the federal government comes looking for support, whether that support will be there.

In moving his motion the Conservative member from Manitoba talked about life in rural communities. I touched on that a bit yesterday when I spoke about who we are as Cape Bretoners. I do not think there is anything particularly unique about our communities in the sense that we understand and help each other. I believe that is shared by the farmers on the prairies. Those of us who have had to struggle against the forces of nature understand that there is a greater force, and the only way communities survive is to link together and work together shoulder to shoulder. Farmers understand that.

The problem is that when natural disasters and forces that are overwhelming are compounded by a lack of vision on the part of

government, it leaves us in an even worse situation. As much as the communities try to come together, policies that divide them will do just that.

Much of the decision making is centred in urban centres, in Toronto or Ottawa, where the importance and the contributions of the rural communities are forgotten. I spent last week, when we were in our ridings during constituency week, travelling the rural parts of my riding. I spent time with farmers. Sadly, I spent a lot of time driving by abandoned farms that were once thriving farms in Cape Breton. I was fortunate enough to have supper in the home of the Peters who have a farm in Margaree. They talked about the kind of farming they were doing and how their neighbour was struggling and looking for help because of the dry weather, but there was no help coming from the government.

I also spent time in the fishing communities. Fishing is addressed in this motion. I congratulate the native leaders and the non-native leaders in my part of the country who have managed, despite the bungling of the federal government, to come to some kind of agreement, or at least a moratorium, where they can work things out.

In June of last year my colleagues from the NDP caucus who represent ridings in Nova Scotia held a press conference. We warned the government at that point that there was going to be a crisis in the fishing industry if the government did not begin to react.

• (1130)

We had the government in court with the native community, which had, prior to that, reached out and said “Let’s negotiate”. It is not as if it did not know there was going to be a decision. I used to practise law. One thing I always did when I went to court was I prepared for a win and prepared for a loss. In this case, we see that the government did not prepare adequately at all.

I congratulate the member who introduced the motion. I also thank the Speaker for being indulgent in giving me a little extra time.

Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will ask the member for Sydney—Victoria a question with regard to the government not being prepared for the situation in agriculture.

We just had an agriculture standing committee meeting this morning where we had representatives from the Royal Bank, which is the largest lender in the agricultural field in Canada, and the Farm Credit Corporation as witnesses in our attempt to find out what the underlying causes are of the current crisis, especially in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Their testimony was very surprising in a number of areas. The witness from the Royal Bank said that he had just come back from a North American banking conference in Colorado where at least

Supply

six American banks held up the NISA program as an example of where the Americans should be going as far as farm safety nets were concerned. Their views on AIDA were described as a program for the times that addressed the situation as it exists today. The Royal Bank representatives said that they have approximately 15,000 farmers dealing with their bank and that there are 350 farmers in arrears, and many of those they are not worried about.

With respect to NISA and AIDA, the people who are lending money to farmers are not experiencing the crisis. They debunk the idea that this is a crisis that could be comparable to the 1930s, the dust bowl and the depression. The people who are lending the money do have concerns but they are not in the crisis mode that a lot of people in the opposition are who are around the prairie provinces holding community meetings.

There are many farmers who will go bankrupt, but as was stated, there are always people in businesses, whether it is farming, the corner garage or whatever, who get into business and go out of business. However, the people who are lending farmers the dollars and who expect the dollars to be repaid are not in the crisis mode that the motion is portraying. How would the member respond to that?

Mr. Peter Mancini: Mr. Speaker, I know that when the Royal Bank speaks the government listens. I do hope that it listens equally to the Farm Credit Corporation. I noticed that there was a great deal of quoting in the question from the Royal Bank of Canada. As I have said, I know that the shareholders in the Royal Bank of Canada carry a fair amount of sway with the Liberal government and that if the Royal Bank is happy with the program, then of course the Liberal government will continue with the program.

I would suggest that perhaps the government might want to listen to some of the elected representatives of the farmers, and instead of listening to the people who are lending the money it listen perhaps to the people who are borrowing the money.

I am going to read what the premier of Saskatchewan had to say about the last federal government announcement. Premier Roy Romanow said:

—federal response to the farm income crisis in Saskatchewan completely misses the mark.

Today's announcement amounts to some technical changes and a very small top-up to AIDA. Our farmers have told us—

It was not the Royal Bank.

—clearly that AIDA does not work. AIDA didn't work before this announcement and won't work after it.

I regret to say I can come to no other conclusion. Ottawa has completely missed the mark.

If it comes to a choice for me of deciding whether I am going to listen to the Royal Bank or the premier of Saskatchewan, I will choose the elected representative any time.

• (1135)

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the NDP for the comments about the Royal Bank and the Liberal government. The Liberals do seem to listen to the opinions of the Royal Bank when it serves their purpose, but when the bank had opinions with respect to mergers I do not believe they listened.

The minister talked about provincial-federal co-operation. Would the member agree that in this particular circumstance, with respect to AIDA being foisted on the provincial governments, that there was a lack of interest by the federal government when Premier Romanow and Premier Doer came here to speak about the crisis? Does the hon. member see a growing sense of federal-provincial co-operation?

Mr. Peter Mancini: Mr. Speaker, no, there does not appear to be any sense of federal-provincial co-operation when two sitting premiers go back and are critical. These two premiers arrived with all good intentions and were prepared to negotiate knowing the ins and outs of negotiation. They are two experienced representatives of the people who went back to their provinces discounting the federal government. No, I do not think it says much for federal-provincial co-operation.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to be able to address the issues brought forward by my colleague from the Conservative Party regarding the agrifood industry and agriculture in general.

The only problem with the wording of the supply motion “That this House regrets the failure of the government—”, is that it should be replaced with that this House is downright angry with this government for its absolute failure to recognize the importance of agriculture and the food industries in the country. It has failed desperately to show any leadership.

This was demonstrated just recently when two premiers from the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba met with the government in all sincerity doing their utmost to try to help the situations in their provinces and were literally snubbed by the Liberal government and our Prime Minister. I think that is totally disgraceful and it should make us all very angry.

The government does not have any long term vision whatsoever. It is bouncing around all over the place with different little programs that never seem to quite work and never seem to fill the bill of what needs to happen.

Supply

The one thing that needs to happen more than anything else is that the government, for heaven's sake, must start to realize the importance and significance of the food and agricultural industries.

I am really tired of sitting in the House of Commons and voting on agricultural issues that would be of benefit to our farmers and fishermen and listening to courts making decisions, such as the Marshall decision. The House sits here and votes on what should happen, while 70 or 80 highfalutin Bay Street lawyers, who probably do not realize that milk does come from a cow and not from a carton, or that cereal is made from grain and does not come out of a box, simply sit on that side of the House and vote according to the wishes of their leader. They do not even know what the issue really is. They do not realize how serious the problem is.

Mr. John Bryden: Reformers aren't the only ones who are farmers, you know.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Maybe the hon. member who is mouth-ing off on that side of the House would like to talk about the 18 or 20 suicides that have occurred in the last few weeks in those western provinces. Maybe he would like to mouth off about that and talk about how insignificant what I am saying is or how we are trying to support our agricultural industry and our farmers in the west.

One thing the Liberal government is very good at is sitting in the House of Commons and criticizing this side of the House anytime we may wish to oppose its methods or its ways of handling any kind of a crisis.

• (1140)

The government has not prepared for this kind of an issue. It has not made any preparation at all except to put a pile of money on the table under a program that requires an absolute genius accountant to fill out the forms.

I have gone over these forms with several farmers in my riding and they are wondering what in the world they are to do with them. The farmers have made an effort. Some of them have spent \$1,600 to \$1,700 to hire an accountant to fill in the form and mail it off, only to be rejected. I should not say they were all rejected, because in the brilliance of the Liberal government, I know of two farmers who received aid under the AIDA program. One farmer received \$9.05 and another received \$3.60. Nobody really understands what this program is all about.

I fail to understand why year after year we have to contend with our products on the west coast not moving. I wonder if the Liberal government is aware that many of the people who we do our marketing with, in particular Japan, do a great deal of business with farmers in my riding. Farmers ship various types of goods in containers to Japan but Japan does not buy goods to store and save for a rainy day. It does not have a storage system. It buys on a continual basis. In other words, the flow of these products must happen regularly and without a stoppage of any kind.

The Japanese people sent a document to my office indicating that they were getting very tired of our country constantly stopping the necessary flow of billions of dollars worth of goods that we market. We are not satisfying our people on the other end because we do not have a government that recognizes the importance of keeping agricultural produce flowing to other parts of the world and keeping the markets alive and well.

Instead, we go through motions year after year in the House to try to put an end to work stoppages, lockouts or whatever the case might be in order to get the ships loaded and the produce out. Instead of addressing the issue as we should have done year after year, for at least 20 years that I know of, we have to deal with it on an as-it-happens basis. It continually hurts us. We are now at the point where ships flag into the country before ever arriving at port wanting to know exactly what the situation is because they do not want to arrive if there is going to be any kind of stoppage.

We are not protecting the industry at all. We do not have their best interests at heart when we allow this to continually happen year after year. It is on record.

Last week, Lynn Hardy, one of my constituents from Carstairs, contacted my office with some very interesting information. During a conversation with a Statistics Canada employee, her husband asked the individual about statistics being touted by both the Prime Minister and the agricultural minister as proof that there is not a farm crisis. Mr. Hardy hoped to learn the origin of these stats.

As it turned out, the employee said that they were very disappointed in the Prime Minister and the agricultural minister for using these stats since they dated back to 1997 and obviously had nothing to do with today's crisis. For those who do not remember, 1997 was a little better than average year, not to mention that it was three years ago.

When will the Liberal government wake up and realize that first, it is 1999 almost 2000, and second, there is a farm crisis? These bogus excuses and these dated stats can no longer be used to deny our farmers the much needed help that they need at this time of crisis.

The very first thing the Liberal government must do is recognize that the agricultural and food industries are the most important industries in the land. That would really be a good start.

• (1145)

Many farmers in my riding would like to know if some people are turning down some of the things they voted on. I think of Bill C-4 of a year or so ago when the government was adamant it was doing the right thing and the farmers cried out that it was not doing the right thing.

Why are they being ignored? They would like to know why their voices are being ignored by the government. My only answer was that 70 or 80 highfalutin Bay Street lawyers do not know what they are doing and vote according to the wishes of their leader instead of

the wishes of the farming industry. That is the only solution I could come up with.

Why have they not sent the Prime Minister, the agriculture minister and the strongest contingent of cabinet ministers to the WTO talks? They should go their with a firm hand demanding a level playing field in the agricultural market. Why do we send all the chief bureaucrats and all the do-little nothings in these departments to handle the major task of getting a message out that we care and are concerned about our farmers?

They sent a committee to the west to find out why Liberals are not getting much support there. They did not listen very well. We gave about a billions reasons when it came to wasteful spending. We gave another billion reasons on overtaxation. The final reason we gave them, in the words of farmers, was that obviously we had a government that just did not care. I would like to see that attitude changed.

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my fellow colleague from Sydney—Victoria mentioned, both of us represent ridings that mirror each other in terms of urban and rural.

When I talk with farmers in my constituency they talk about the lack of commitment and leadership. Unfortunately for us in Cape Breton we have been affected by the government's so-called commitment to fishermen and its so-called commitment to farmers. What we are told is that maybe we should broaden our tourism base. I can see it now. We will have a tourist attraction where rich Americans can drive by and look at our abandoned farms and the way things used to be.

Some would say that there is and has been for a very long time a serious attack on rural communities by starving them to death. Does the member believe that the recent results of the byelection in Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar is a clear message to the Liberal government from rural communities?

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party certainly did not do very well in that byelection. That should be a message of some sort.

I will comment on the fact the government would like to make a tourist industry out of a lot of these areas. In order to get a good chunk of money in my riding for the agricultural industry we only need to get a group of people together to haul in a bunch of old machinery, old thrashing machines and equipment that is outdated and maybe horse drawn. We would need a bunch of money to refurbish them, paint them and put them in some kind of a museum, and we would have dollars flowing like we would not believe.

To prevent a disaster such as the suicides that are taking place in the west because of the lack of concern and lack of care by the

Supply

government, there seems to be a real struggle to get any recognition at all.

Let us paint our old thrashing machines, do all this fancy-dancy stuff, put up a nice little museum in the name of the Government of Canada, the Liberal Party—we might even put the Prime Minister's name on it—and the dollars will flow, especially if we send the heritage minister out there. We will get the dollars going then. She is a good spender.

• (1150)

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was the one who made the remark from this side on the member's speech, but only because he was suggesting that some of us on this side do not have farmers in our ridings that are in trouble, and we do. I appreciate the passion with which he spoke to this issue, but I want him to know that on this side of the House we feel the same passion.

I want to take issue with another point in the hon. member's speech. That is the suggestion that the fault of the problems with the farmers is entirely that of the federal government. I point out to him that the Saskatchewan auditor general recently released a report that showed that the province of Saskatchewan is claiming to be spending over \$300 million on farm aid when in fact half of that money is actually coming from the federal government and from the producers. The auditor general pointed out that many of the Saskatchewan government's claims of aid to farmers is more than half in contributions coming from the federal government.

Is it not possible that part of the problem, part of the difficulty in which the farmers find themselves in Saskatchewan, is due to their own government in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I suppose anything is possible. One thing that is not possible, it seems, is that it is very difficult to get the actual amount of dollars brought to the federal government through some form of taxation or another of our farmers.

This is Ottawa. This is the federal government. We have a very strong purpose in the food industry in protecting our farmers as best we can and in providing for level playing fields. We are not doing a very good job. We are not taking the leadership in WTO with the firmness that we ought to be taking. We are not negotiating for our people with the strength that we should be able to do.

The government has not prepared a vision. It does not show leadership and has failed to do so. Even the Government of Saskatchewan has outshone the federal Liberal government. The provincial governments have outshone it on a number of occasions. I can guarantee the hon. member that this is true in Alberta.

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Fundy—Royal.

Supply

It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to my party's motion urging the government to give urgent consideration to the immediate and long term needs of Canada's agriculture and fishing industries. The livelihood of many families in my riding depends a lot on our natural resources.

The Liberal government has ignored the rural communities far too long. Members on the other side of the House have waited for crises to go on and on before trying inadequately to resolve them. Rural Canadians have had enough. It is time for the government to provide leadership, a long term vision and workable solutions for Canada's fishery and agriculture sectors.

The government did not prepare for the Marshall decision of the Supreme Court of Canada which acknowledged fishing, hunting and gathering rights for Canada's aboriginal people. The government should have prepared a plan for this decision.

We all knew the supreme court was to make a decision on this case. This decision has effectively pitted native and non-native fishers against each other as their leaders try to determine how the lucrative lobster fishery should be regulated in light of the recent supreme court ruling. Actually it has gone beyond native and non-native fishers to communities fighting each other. That is the sad situation we are seeing in Atlantic Canada right now.

Conservation is an important issue. We should not forget the auditor general's warning last spring that the shellfish fishery is in danger.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

Chapter 4 of the auditor general's report tabled on April 20 voiced some serious concerns about the way Fisheries and Oceans Canada has been managing the lobster, scallop, snow crab and shrimp fisheries.

According to the auditor general:

The absence of a formal fisheries policy that fully reflects sustainability concepts means that decisions on resource use are made on an ad hoc and inconsistent basis rather than as part of an overall framework for achieving a sustainable fishery.

As we are doing here today, the auditor general decries the government's lack of vision in the fisheries industry. In 1997 he expressed similar concerns about groundfish stocks. The government did not learn a lesson from this, and now the shellfish and crustacean fisheries are involved.

It is important for the government to realize that everything is interrelated and that whole communities suffer when the crops or the catches are poor. The fishermen, farmers and other workers in these industries are seasonal workers and are therefore victims of discrimination by our employment insurance system.

As if it were not enough to place these industries in a precarious position, the government then refuses to give the workers in them

any proper assistance. These workers, who pay into the program, often live in regions where the economy is not active enough to allow them to find work in the off season.

In my riding, there are a number of cases where people have no income from January on. They have worked long and hard during the season but do not have any money coming in for long periods of time and cannot support their families because of the discrimination this government practices toward them.

I recently visited the food banks in my riding of Beauséjour-Petitcodiac. Everyone involved blamed the cuts to employment insurance for the increase in users. This is a serious situation.

[*English*]

I am urging the government to have a vision for rural Canada. I realize it cannot have a vision for rural Canada until it understands what rural Canada means, and it does not care enough to try to learn. It does not have a vision.

Even if the government had a vision for rural Canada right now I would be afraid of what that vision would be because until it goes out to see what is happening in rural Canada it cannot have a vision. We cannot treat with something that is not working. We cannot treat sick people with medication if we do not know what we are treating them for. We have to find out what is the problem.

[*Translation*]

That is what we see going on in our regions and in our rural communities. This is why the employment insurance program was destroyed, was run in a way that no longer takes the needs of our people into account. These people include fishers and workers in factories, tourism and construction.

This government is refusing to understand what is going on. My colleague from the Reform Party spoke of suicide among farmers. It is sad to see that happening, and I can understand how sad it is in the west at the moment with the suicide rate. I have seen that happening in the Atlantic region since the start of the employment insurance reforms. I know of people no longer with us today, who killed themselves or whose heart gave out because they no longer had an income and no longer met the requirements to qualify for employment insurance.

There are now two major problems, and I wonder just when the Liberal government is going to realize that we do not all live in major urban centres. There is a Canada outside these centres, rural Canada. The government has to accept and recognize that and work with these communities. It is time this government showed some leadership. This is what we need, and the fact that we do not have it is sad.

[*English*]

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the member opposite that the two

lower courts ruled the other way in the Marshall decision. They ruled in the same direction as the minority decision which decreed that aboriginals did not have a treaty right to fish and hunt regardless of the laws of the Government of Canada.

• (1200)

That aside, I would like to ask the member opposite, just as I asked the member for West Nova, were this an issue that had come before this parliament for debate rather than before the supreme court, how would she have voted? Would she have voted that the aboriginals had unlimited rights to fish and hunt regardless of the laws of the land, or would she have voted with the minority judge of the supreme court and said that they did not have that right? How would she have voted?

Ms. Angela Vautour: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that what we should have been doing is negotiating it here. We should not let the courts decide everything for us. What are we here for? We have to listen to both sides. I do not think that only the politicians sitting in here trying to decide for the rest of the country is the way to go either. We have to negotiate outside.

The government had a chance to do that in February and again in June. When the representative, Mr. Christmas, was here to negotiate with the government, it refused to negotiate. The government put all its eggs in the same basket and said the supreme court will rule the other way. It did not happen that way and the government did not have a plan B. That is why we are in this situation today.

It is clear there could have been a very peaceful solution to this but the government refused to look that way.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to have the opportunity to listen to the comments of my colleague from Beauséjour—Petitcodiac. She pointed out how ill prepared the federal government has been on just about everything it has done in general.

In particular, does the hon. member believe that it was complete shortsightedness, if not blindness, for the federal government not to have had in place interim regulations just in case the Marshall decision went the other way?

Does the hon. member think that the government should have had interim measures in place? Does the hon. member think that the present Minister of the Environment, the then minister of fisheries, should have given a political heads up to the now Minister of Fisheries and Oceans by saying that the Marshall case might be a problem? The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said that he had never heard of the Marshall decision until the day that it was announced.

Supply

Ms. Angela Vautour: Mr. Speaker, it shows again a lack of understanding. Let us face it, the government has been ruling with an iron fist. The Liberals are doing it their way or no way at all and they do not really care what is happening across the country. We have seen it with other portfolios. We have seen how they have abandoned rural Canada, and let us face it, fishing is in rural Canada. Did they care enough to have a plan B? No, they did not and that is what we saw again. They could have had something in place, but there was nothing. There was no plan A, there was no plan B, there was no plan at all because they just did not care.

To think that a minister was able to say “I did not know that this was actually coming down”. When ministers change ministries do they just leave and there is no adjustment period with the work, especially with something as important as the whole livelihood of our fishing industry and communities?

I am wondering what the government is doing now that we know that the aboriginal peoples have on the table that they are going after 30% to 50% of the Atlantic fishery. Is the government aware of this? Is the government actually at the table? We have been made aware by the representative for the aboriginal peoples that they are going after 30% to 50% of the Atlantic fishery. That is a very scary thought. I wonder what the government is doing about it.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in today's debate. Every time I have the opportunity to participate in debate and represent those constituents who live in Fundy—Royal I am pleased to do so.

The problem is that the debate we are engaging in today is essentially the abdication of government. It is a lack of planning by the Liberal government particularly in two sectors, fisheries and agriculture, and with respect to all the difficult decisions which governments have to undertake.

• (1205)

I would like to begin my speech by quoting Jeffrey Simpson of the *Globe and Mail* on October 28, 1998. The Liberals have no compass, no direction and no idea of where to take the country. This intellectually lifeless government believes all politics is administration, whereas it should be about policies, ideas and values.

That is the debate we are engaging in today. The government uses a 911 style of management, “We have a crisis, now we have to deal with it”.

My father Murray Herron is a fine man. My father said the best way to deal with a crisis was to avoid it in the first place by having a plan to address it. I want to talk about the systematic abdication and lack of planning of the Liberal government.

Almost two years ago to the day there were debates in the House with respect to the Kyoto climate change conference. Two years

Supply

ago to the day this House admitted that we were not prepared with a pan-Canadian position on targets, timelines and an implementation strategy to address the serious issue of climate change and how Canada would make its contribution. We went to Kyoto with no plan. We came back with no plan. Two years later in 1999, we still have not seen any sort of implementation strategy from the Liberal government.

The Alberta government of Ralph Klein is one government that has actually shown some leadership in getting the process to address the issue of climate change going. It has taken some initiatives.

Why do we not see some aggressive tax incentives to address climate change? Why do we not see research and development dollars for renewable sources of energy, or tax incentives for energy efficiency initiatives? Those are things we could be doing today so that industry could start delivering some early action on that issue. The government has done nothing for two years in that regard.

We also saw a systematic abdication of leadership in planning with respect to the Marshall decision. We saw this two times, first in February and later on in June when first nations from Atlantic Canada approached officials in Ottawa to negotiate a systematic and peaceful integration into the fishery as opposed to going to the supreme court. The government loves to govern by courts, not by parliament and not by letting elected officials make the decisions. It would rather abdicate its role and let the courts decide. Sometimes the courts decide things that make it very difficult for us to manage.

On first nations issues in particular, there are three ways some individuals might consider when dealing with treaty rights and the rightful role first nations have in our society. First, some individuals on the very extreme edge would advocate violence on both sides. I am proud to say our society has advanced beyond that stage. The second method is to let the courts decide things. Sometimes we do not like the way the courts solve things. The third way and the best way is to do it by peaceful negotiation. The government had an opportunity to do this twice, in February and in June when Mr. Christmas came to Ottawa for a peaceful integration into the fishery, but again the Liberals ducked it. They always duck hard issues.

Long gone are the days when we actually took on the hard and difficult issues in order to build this nation. Long gone are the days of leadership that brought forth initiatives like free trade which took our trade ratio with the Americans from \$90 billion in 1988 to well over \$260 billion today. That was the result of leadership. Long gone are the days when we had initiatives in terms of privatization, deregulation and free trade. Now we have abdication and government by the courts.

• (1210)

We have also seen probably the most catastrophic incident in terms of the federal government not having a plan on serious issues. I am sure everyone remembers October 30, 1995, the date of the referendum in the province of Quebec. Leading up to that referendum the Prime Minister said "We have no problem. Everything is under control. Don't worry, be happy". We almost lost our country. If it had not been for the positive initiative of our former leader, the Hon. Jean J. Charest and his contribution in that debate, we might have had a more serious result.

When it comes to planning, the Prime Minister said that he would take the initiative to recognize that Quebec was in fact a distinct society, that we needed to recognize something that we cherish which is two centuries old with respect to the language, culture and civil code of the six million francophones who live in the province of Quebec. That promise was made that night on television. Since then the Liberals' plan for unifying our country has been to take this issue to court, to make it a legal issue as opposed to a political issue.

When our founding fathers built this country, they built it because they knew we would be stronger together. A country is built through common will and not through a legal decision about whether or not we should exist. Do we have the right to break up? The best thing the government could have done would be to have had some very direct leadership in that regard.

We saw it in the currency crisis last year. When the commodity crash took place primarily along the Pacific Rim, there were negative implications for our country. The reaction of the Prime Minister and the finance minister in terms of the currency crisis was that it was not their fault, that things happen in the world.

I know my friends in the Reform Party, especially the member for Lethbridge, very much agree with me that we could have sent some very positive signals. Instead of saying that we would have a surplus and put 50% on new spending and 50% on tax and debt reduction, we could have made a very serious and deliberate plan to reduce our debt to GDP ratio. We could have paid down the debt in a very serious way which would have added ongoing value to our currency and we could have been far more competitive in that regard.

There is a trend happening. The Liberals were not ready for the climate change initiative. They almost lost our country with respect to the referendum. They were not prepared for the Marshall decision. There was the currency crisis. Recently it has been 911 management. We are heading into an election.

My friends on the Liberal side who are primarily from Atlantic Canada came out with a report entitled "Catching the Wave: How to Build a Better Atlantic Canada". After they have been defeated on an issue with respect to abandoning the tolls on a toll highway

which this federal government collaborated on, they are saying that maybe tolls are not such a good idea. Again, they make it up as they go.

We need a government of leadership, a government that actually plans. We do not need initiatives that deal with issues as they come up as crises. We need to deal with the very hard issues that face this country. Let us pay down the debt. Let us lower taxes. Let us grow this economy so we can compete in the next millennium.

• (1215)

Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was just wondering when I was listening to the speeches by the member for Fundy—Royal and the member for Beauséjour—Petitcodiac what would have been their reaction if last February the government had reacted to Mr. Christmas' request to open up the fishery to the first nations of Atlantic Canada.

Can we imagine the howls of derision from members on that side of the House, or from that member when she was on the other side of the House, if the government unilaterally gave away the fishing rights to the aboriginals? Can we imagine the howls and screaming that would be coming from the opposite benches that we should be able to read the minds of the supreme court justices the same as they were able to read the minds of the lower court justices in Nova Scotia?

They are standing up holier than thou to say that we should have been prepared, that we should have been able to read the minds of the supreme court justices and that we should have shared earlier, and maybe we should have, with the aboriginals.

Can we imagine what would have happened if DFO had called a meeting to bring all sides together and said they would be sharing the Atlantic fishery because Donald Marshall has a case going to the courts and may lose it? Can we imagine what would have happened if DFO pre-empted that decision by negotiating something before the courts had a chance to see it? Can we imagine what the reaction would have been from over there?

Mr. John Herron: Mr. Speaker, the issue before us right now is to be able to say that it was okay not to be prepared, that it was all right not to have a plan, that it was okay not to have regulations in place just in case the Marshall decision went in a direction the federal government was not happy with.

I am confused and a little worried about what the hon. member is actually advocating. He is saying that the best way to deal with the crisis is to let the courts decide and not have a plan. There are bags of lawyers running around Ottawa all the time. I want to say as well that it is an admirable profession, but the government should not even ask any of them whether it should actually have some regulations in place in case it goes sour. The parliamentary

Supply

secretary is advocating right now that not having a plan is really the Liberal plan.

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing time with the hon. member for Wentworth—Burlington. I will address only the second paragraph of the motion by the member for Brandon—Souris, that is to say the issues concerning the supreme court, the Marshall decision on fishing and other rights of aboriginal people.

The member for Brandon—Souris has distinguished himself in the House as a member who has a whimsical sense of humour. It is much appreciated. I wonder if perhaps some of his polemics in the motion should not be interpreted in that light.

I would remind the hon. member concerned, however, that his party was in office during the crucial period of nine years almost immediately after the adoption of the charter of rights, which included the saving of aboriginal rights still to be defined by virtue of sections 25 and 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. There was a wonderful opportunity in a period of historical transition to set in place sophisticated processes for the elaboration and definition of those rights and of dispute settlement and other machinery. It was an opportunity missed. Somebody was asleep. It was the Rip Van Winkle philosophy.

The process has been engaged upon and for better or worse we have to deal with it as it now arises. The motion, however, and I accept it in this spirit, is directed toward trying to establish policies, policy constructs, for the future in relation to aboriginal and other rights.

• (1220)

We need a debate on this issue. The last great venture was the white paper of 1969 which had many brilliant and imaginative ideas but for a number of reasons in the political climate at the time it was judged unadoptable. It just did not command the community support necessary to get it through.

In the intervening time a too pre-emptive concern with special constitutional issues thought to relate to Quebec tended to kill off discussion of other issues. I do not believe there is any incompatibility between the two.

Although his purpose was directed toward Quebec provincial politics, I signal in this regard the announcement yesterday by the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve of a new plan for Quebec constitutionalism. He recognized, for the first time explicitly by a member of his party, that Quebec issues cannot be divorced from issues of the aboriginal communities within Quebec. They are part of the general society and must be part of the process.

My basic comment on this general issue is that it is illusory to believe that any one federal institution, whether the courts, the

Supply

legislature, the executive, the administration and the civil service separate from that, can have a monopoly of problem solving powers or can even function usefully operating in isolation from other institutions.

We are reminded of Jeremy Bentham's basic point, to which I have had occasion to refer in other debates in the House, that there is a constitutional company and that judges, cabinet ministers, parliamentarians and administrators all function together. The federal government has given an emphasis to consensual solutions of the definition, extension and concretization of aboriginal rights, and that means an emphasis on interpartes negotiations.

We have to recognize the practical limits to powers of negotiation which go to issues of expertise, time and continuity. There has always been a place for courts in the finding and limiting the constitutional parameters in which any decisions must be made.

Some issues, on examination, require very specific and detailed research and weighing of complicated economic evidence. This normally transcends the possibilities of parliamentarians, even operating in standing committees. I would note the difficulties of both the aboriginal affairs committee and the fisheries committee in handling these technical issues.

These are issues that can be well addressed and may best be addressed in courts, provided the lawyers are up to the task. We need a better standard of performance by the lawyers presenting cases before the court.

I do not see the sophistication in presentation of briefs. The Brandeis Brief, named after the great Mr. Justice Brandeis, details social and economic evidence of the implications of court decisions including the practical consequences of those decisions. If that is missing in judicial decisions, one of the points to recognize is that it is missing because it is not properly presented by the parties. The Brandeis Brief starts first of all with the lawyers before the court and the judges have to respond to that.

There is an opportunity for a more confident judicial role in these matters. It is to be noted that the judges were not called upon for advice when the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was first considered. They were not asked about their new role. It was inevitable a species of judicial legislation would emerge, but they were not consulted. It is a learning process.

Among changes for the future that I would like my colleagues in the party opposite to address would be whether a contribution could be made by creating specialized tribunals of first instance. There is some unhappiness with the federal court in its various divisions because it is viewed as an Ottawa body composed of ex-civil servants and often ex-politicians but with an eastern Canadian orientation.

• (1225)

Would it be better to have special mixed claims tribunals as we have internationally? Would it be better to endow provincial supreme courts, which represent and reflect and understand local opinion and issues, with the primary authority, subject to appeals to the Supreme Court of Canada? This is where in a larger policy context we could invite and receive contributions in the debate as it continues before us.

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am going to address all my remarks in this debate to the proposition in the motion that the government should have known that this decision with respect to the Marshall case would be coming down.

The Marshall case, as members will recall, was the decision of the supreme court, a majority decision whereby aboriginals were given the right to fish commercially, rights that transcend the laws that may apply to non-aboriginals, the laws of the land. Of course we know the upshot. There was conflict and strife on the east coast. I suggest that as a result of this decision of the supreme court there will continue to be conflict and strife.

Earlier in this debate I asked the member for West Nova, who is a member of the party that introduced this motion, how he would have voted had this issue been debated in this House, in parliament, rather than being dealt with and decided upon by the supreme court. He dodged the question, I have to say. He did not reply.

I submit that if the Marshall issue had come before this parliament instead of before the supreme court, this parliament would have decided against the decision that the supreme court eventually came down with. I submit that this parliament assembled, indeed I would suggest even the majority of members on this side, would not have countenanced the decision that we have from the supreme court which gives one group of people special rights over the general population based, at the very best, on a very facile and simplified reading of the historical accounts. The very historian who came before the supreme court on which the supreme court based its decision has said that his remarks were taken entirely out of context by the supreme court.

What do we have here? We have a situation where five individuals have come to a decision that has a profound impact on the rest of Canadians. Indeed we have the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development saying that he thinks this decision will extend to all resources, to mines, to hunting, to anything imaginable. Of course that is going to lead to a lot of problems, but we are led to understand that when the supreme court rules it is a decision that we must abide by. I submit to you, Madam Speaker, that it is not quite like that at all.

I have done a bit of research over the last few weeks. What I have discovered is that Canada as a constitutional parliamentary

democracy does not have the supreme court in its constitution. Unlike the United States, unlike India or Australia or New Zealand or even Germany, for that matter, the supreme court is not in the constitution. There is a passing reference to the supreme court only in the charter of rights which says basically that if the composition of the supreme court is to be changed there has to be agreement by the two houses of this parliament.

The power of the supreme court, which we are led to believe we as parliament cannot change, comes from an act of parliament, the Supreme Court of Canada act. This act was passed in 1875. At the time the constitution was being re-examined in 1982 this parliament chose not to put the supreme court in the constitution as it is in the United States, as it is in India, as it is in just about every other democracy that has a constitution.

What that means, Madam Speaker, is the fathers of confederation, circa 1982, were uncomfortable with the fact that if you put the supreme court in the constitution then it becomes equally powerful to parliament. That is always the debate when it comes to democracies that have constitutions and democracies that have parliamentary rule, as in the case of Britain, the idea being that if there is not a constitution, then parliament is supreme; if there is a constitution, that divides the power, as happens under the constitution of the United States where power is shared equally by the legislature, the executive branch—that is, the president—and the supreme court of the United States.

• (1230)

In Canada we have no such thing because the supreme court is in an act of the Parliament of Canada. It is not in the constitution. Its powers are spelled out by an act of this legislature, this House of Commons. That means that no matter what, when the supreme court comes down with a decision it is a decision in the context of this parliament. I would submit that that decision at any time can be overruled by this parliament because this parliament is supreme. It is above the supreme court because the supreme court is a creature of this parliament and not a creature of the constitution.

What do we have with this decision by the supreme court? We have a decision in which only seven out of nine judges sat because the court has the privilege to set its quorum. That is in the legislation, the Supreme Court of Canada act. What we have is a decision based on five members of the court ruling one way and two members of the court ruling the other.

We are led to believe that this is a binding judgment of the court, that we have to obey it, that this parliament is required to obey that decision. But, Madam Speaker, would it surprise you if I told you that in the Supreme Court of Canada act there is no mention of a binding judgment? There is no mention of what constitutes a binding judgment. There is no mention of whether a judgment

Supply

should be by majority, by minority, or whatever. We can assume that if all judges agree, that would be a binding judgement. But, when there is division, when they do not all agree, particularly on a constitutional matter, then surely it should be a subject for debate in this parliament.

Surely, when it is a constitutional issue affecting all Canadians we cannot leave it. We cannot passively sit by and let the supreme court judges rule, who control whom they hear, who control the hours they sit, who control their quorum, who do not have to consult parliament and, indeed, under the rules of parliamentary privilege, do not even have to pay any attention to anything that I say in the House. Because according to the rules of parliamentary privilege, as interpreted by the supreme court, an MP's opinion of the law does not affect the court's judgement and the court does not have to take that opinion into account.

Thus we have a situation where we have a body of five—seven individuals in this case—making a profound decision with respect to all Canadians, a decision that is supposed to be binding on this parliament, but in fact cannot be binding on parliament because the Supreme Court of Canada act is legislation which was created by parliament. While I would not want to overturn the Marshall decision as it stands now with respect to the particular incident, I submit that this parliament always has the power to interpret the constitution.

I will make one other point. Madam Speaker, if you look at the Supreme Court of Canada act, just to make sure you see where I am coming from, you will see that the only mention in the Supreme Court Act, as revised in 1983, to the supreme court judges considering the constitution is when there are references by the government to the court on constitutional matters. Those references ask simply for an opinion. In the drafting of the revised Supreme Court of Canada act this parliament was not prepared to say that the Supreme Court of Canada, when it was considering a reference from the government, would be a binding judgment, and that, Madam Speaker, is the only section 53 of the Supreme Court of Canada act.

I submit that the reason is, that particular section also allows the Supreme Court of Canada to make judgments or express opinions with respect to parliament.

• (1235)

Madam Speaker, you have a situation where the fathers of confederation, circa 1982, obviously perceived that this parliament could not be subject to the Supreme Court of Canada, it could not be below the Supreme Court of Canada, so they ensured that when the Supreme Court of Canada made decisions with respect to parliament or the constitution they were only expressions of opinion. I suggest that parliament should take the message from its predecessors, those who framed the Supreme Court of Canada act

Supply

as it exists now, and consider the supreme court decisions when they are only majority decisions as being for guidance only.

In the end, it is this parliament, this parliament, that has to decide on constitutional issues.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the lesson on the history of the Supreme Court of Canada. However, the last time I read this motion it dealt with two principal issues concerning the importance of Canada's food industry, namely the family farm and fishers who earn their living fishing along our coasts.

The problem with the speech just given is that the government would rather talk about bureaucracy and how court decisions are made as opposed to providing leadership in terms of long term safety nets and dealing with the farm income crisis. The government should have been prepared for the Marshall decision in the first place.

Can the member say the words farm and fishers?

Mr. John Bryden: Madam Speaker, as the member should know, I began my remarks by saying that I would confine them to the Marshall decision.

I point out to him that paragraph (b) of the motion states that the government did not adequately prepare for the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada v Marshall which acknowledged fishing, hunting and gathering rights for Canada's aboriginal peoples.

That is precisely what I spoke about. I wish the member would have at least had the decency to listen.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Madam Speaker, the member for Fundy—Royal has it all wrong.

The speech made by the member for Wentworth—Burlington is probably one of the finest speeches I have heard in the House in a long time. He has gone right to the nub of the issue. It is a matter which is of great consequence to fishermen, not only on the east coast but also on the west coast, and that is the impact of the Marshall decision which was brought down by the Supreme Court of Canada.

That decision has the ability to replace the existing fishermen, especially in the lobster fishery on the east coast, with members of the Mi'kmaq community. I do not think that was the intention of the court necessarily, but certainly that has been the interpretation of it.

What the member is contributing to the debate is very valuable and worthwhile because he is addressing the key issue of how this place can address that critical decision of the court and whether there is room for the government to manoeuvre on this issue, and

manoeuvre it should for two very good reasons. One is to promote or ensure that goodwill remains between the communities affected by the decision, and the other of course is the well-being of the resource if the government does not maintain its control.

With that in mind, how does the member think the government should respond to the Marshall decision, given its impact on the fishery?

Mr. John Bryden: Madam Speaker, I think the government should regard the decision in Marshall as an appellate decision and respect the decision, but not regard it as being instructive on the broader constitutional issue.

I really do believe that the supreme court and the judges have no right to dictate to this parliament. The evidence I put forward is the very fact that the supreme court is not a constitutional entity, it is a creature of this parliament, and this parliament must make the final decisions when it comes to constitutional interpretation.

• (1240)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Prince Albert.

We are here today to debate a motion presented by the Conservative Party. The motion is quite wordy, as we might expect. The first part of the motion states that this government has failed to provide leadership, a long term vision and workable solutions for Canada's fishery and agriculture sectors. The motion could have stopped at "Canada" because the government has failed to provide the leadership and long term vision for all of Canada.

I will address my remarks to the crisis facing our agriculture producers. The mismanagement we have seen on both coasts in the fishery industry, the terrible turmoil that has been created by the Marshall decision and by some of the policies put in place by the government have certainly spilled over. Its lack of determination and will to go on to the world stage to fight the subsidies of the European Union and the protectionism of the Americans has created a huge problem in our agriculture sector right across the country.

There seems to be a genuine lack of understanding on the part of the government concerning this situation. It took us a long time, as the official opposition pounded away at the government, to get it to realize there was a problem and to bring that issue to the House. We did that through the form of a debate a year ago and it continues to be a huge problem.

The premiers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba came to Ottawa a week or so ago. They do not do that very often. They came to explain to the government that there is a huge crisis on the prairies in agriculture. When they got here they were presented with some

new facts from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada saying that its new numbers indicate there is no crisis. Numbers are numbers.

Even if we use these numbers, the projections for the year 2000 for total net income have declined from the 1994-98 average, which was a \$760 million return in Saskatchewan, to a projected number of \$267 million for July 2000. That is taking the total net income of a province and chopping it to a third. How can we possibly exist in the agricultural industry, in agricultural provinces such as Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta and others, when our net incomes are being cut to a third of what they were?

Getting past numbers, we are talking about the ability of our family farms to sustain their livelihood, to feed their families and to feed Canadians.

There was an article printed in the *Minnedosa Tribune* in September that gives an idea of what has happened to the business aspect of our family farms. There were comparisons made between 1974 and 1998 which relate everything back to bushels of grain. In 1974 10 bushels of grain would buy 200 gallons of gas. In 1998 155 bushels of grain would buy 200 gallons of gas. To buy a grain truck in 1974 cost 1,400 bushels. In 1998 16,000 bushels of grain bought the same truck. To buy a combine in 1974 cost 6,500 bushels of grain. In 1998 it cost 96,000 bushels. How are we supposed to maintain an agriculture industry with those kinds of figures?

Subsidies in Europe and protectionism in the United States have increased production so that the value of the crops produced is lower. Had we not had bumper crops for many areas in the farm sector this year things would be compounded severely. Thank goodness we had bumper crops for many areas because they will help us get through this terrible dip. However, it will not be a long term solution.

Another aspect of this, brought to my attention by one of my constituents a while ago, is the amount of money that is generated by selling beer. This goes on quite a bit but I just want to get this on the record. One bushel of malt barley sells for \$2.15. That is what I sold my barley for this year. I sold it for feed, but it was \$2.15 a bushel. That bushel of malt barley makes 333 bottles. A dozen beers sell for \$17.50 a case, so 333 bottles would be 27 cases. That means a \$485 return from one bushel of barley. At 50 bushels per acre, \$24,000 per acre is being returned. On a quarter section of land, that is almost \$4 million that has been created from the barley that the farmers get \$2.15 a bushel for.

• (1245)

Let us look at taxes. The NDP member for Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys has put forward a motion that the GST collected on the sale of beer should be donated or directed toward National Hockey League clubs. The GST generated on the beer produced from one bushel is a little over \$20 and he suggested that

Supply

this money should go to National Hockey League teams and to multimillionaire players.

Would it not be nice if some of that money could be directed back to the farmer? Would it not be nice if we could take the \$2.15 a bushel return to the farmer, take some of the GST and give it back to the farmer and tell him he will now get \$5 a bushel? Instead, the hon. member suggested that it go to NHL hockey players.

The government has put in place the AIDA program. I have more figures. It is really interesting because some of the AIDA programs are being administered by the provinces and some are being administered by the federal government. The programs that are being administered by the provinces have processed and paid on 58% of the claims, whereas the ones administered by the federal government have only paid on 37% of the claims put in.

It is almost a joke that the programs being administered by the provinces are doing a better job of getting the money out to the farmers than the federal government is. Why that should be is beyond me, but I believe it is because of the bureaucracy. The federal government has trouble handling these situations, whereas the provinces are closer to the people and better able to administer and are doing a far better job at getting the money out to where it belongs.

Another issue I would like to put into this equation is the fuel tax that comes out of the prairies every year and goes into the federal treasury and does not come back.

In fiscal year 1998-99 the federal government collected approximately \$4.4 billion in transportation fuel taxes. Federal expenditures on road infrastructure in the same year are estimated at \$198 million. That is a nickel back for every dollar it collects in fuel tax to put into the roads. There is another area where the government could do something to improve the roads. Maybe it should not take that money if it will not put it into roads. It should leave it in the pockets of the producers.

A number of things need to be done to address the problems in the agriculture sector. The first thing we need to do is to use the federal safety net programs to support Canadian food producers who are struggling and cannot make ends meet on a short term basis as a result of natural hazards or whatever. We need to have a program in place to get people through those times.

We need to have an AIDA program that works, that gets the money out to the people and gets it to where the hurt is. The government has failed to fulfil its promise to get those funds delivered.

We need to look at the root causes of the income crisis. We need to look at safety net programs that work and are in place to take care of these crises.

We need to look at reducing the European and U.S. subsidies. We need to go to the next round of WTO and NAFTA talks, which is

Supply

happening this month, to fight for our farmers. We need to beat those subsidies down so that we are in a position to help our producers. We cannot as a country support the level of subsidy that these other countries do, so our method of fighting that has to get tougher at the negotiating table.

• (1250)

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I note from the supply day motion that the Progressive Conservatives have attempted to cover all of the hot button issues they think are facing Canada today. They have certainly hit a couple of them. They start by excoriating the government for failing to provide leadership, a long term vision and workable solutions for Canada's fishery and agricultural sectors. Then they move on to the recent supreme court decision on the Marshall case which threw the Atlantic fishing community into turmoil. Then they go back to Canada's agricultural producers and urge the government to give urgent consideration to the immediate and long term needs of Canada's agricultural and fishing industries.

While they are busy bringing together a stew of a motion, Reform members are out in western Canada visiting about 60 communities. They are talking to farmers, municipal leaders, provincial politicians, anyone who has been hurt by the agricultural crisis, anyone who has a proposed solution to the agricultural crisis or who has information that would be useful in developing policy. It is not necessarily to address it so much as to answer how we are going to get the Liberals to even listen, how are we going to get them to know. The Liberals threw their high profile candidate in Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar to the wolves. They made no effort whatsoever to help him out. I think he got his deposit back, but that was it. The Reform Party is out there working.

The Liberal Party treated our agricultural and political leaders very poorly during their last visit to the national capital. They presented their case. They were basically shown some figures and then shown the door. Thanks for coming, don't call us, we'll call you is the attitude toward western Canadian leaders, and the Liberals wonder why they are unpopular out there. My stars, they have no idea at all.

The Liberals are improvising on agriculture. They are also improvising on Indian affairs, for instance on the Marshall decision.

I find it ironic that the Progressive Conservatives would express concern over the Marshall decision. They bandy about terms in the House such as "first nation", "nation to nation", "government to government", "inherent right" and "sovereignty", while they do not have a clue what they mean. They do not even try to find out what they mean. They just roll on talking with no concern that the words they use actually have legal meanings, that they create

expectations and environments in which we end up with these types of Marshall decisions.

We ended up in a situation where fisheries managers have to allow the Mi'kmaq in eastern Canada to fully satisfy their right to fish for a moderate livelihood before anyone else can. They have priority over all other claims on the fishery no matter how long they were established, notwithstanding the ownership of a valid licence whether commercial or sport and no matter which level of government issues the licence. These priority rights mean that someone standing there fishing could well be moved along.

Is this supposed to create an environment where we get along with one another, where we care for one another, where there is equality? Not likely. That is not the way I see it. That is not the way most people see it. That is only the way those blinkered people who create such policies see it.

Part of the decision talked about a moderate livelihood. What is a moderate livelihood? Does anyone in this House presume to know what a moderate livelihood is? I do not. Before I became a member of parliament I had one idea of a moderate livelihood; now I have another. I presume people who own large and successful corporations have another. What would Bill Gates call a moderate livelihood? What would a person on welfare call a moderate livelihood? Is this to be decided in the House? Is it to be decided in Atlantic Canada? Is it to be decided back in the supreme court with another case which will really solve nothing? It will be sent back saying to go negotiate it.

• (1255)

Moderate livelihood, what does it do? Will it exclude the accumulation of wealth and buy only the basics such as food, clothing and housing, as they say? I heard it said the other day in New Brunswick that \$80,000 is a moderate livelihood. The average income in my riding of Prince Albert is around \$36,000. That means just about everyone in the riding is not making a moderate livelihood. If those are the numbers, what are we supposed to make of any kind of decisions that arise?

If it is only a moderate livelihood, day to day, a small house and enough food to get through today and not tomorrow, why would anyone make significant investments in fishing gear if they are only going to make what is called a day to day living and not accumulate wealth? After all, people want to lead a prosperous lifestyle. They want to look after their children, pass something along. That is accumulation of wealth.

The Nisga'a leaders who appeared before the standing committee stated that they wanted their children to live in dignity, respect and prosperity. They did not want a hand to mouth existence. They wanted prosperity. I do not agree that what is in the Nisga'a treaty is going to deliver it but that is their dream and their hope. I wish them well in pursuing it.

Supply

That definition of moderate livelihood is far too broad and vague to permit any definitive application.

What does it mean in the context of a native attempting to broaden the definition to cover other resource industries such as lumber which they are trying to do? For instance, if an Indian were making the so-called basic necessities or even prospering by being a member of a band government or a band administrator or a businessman, or whatever he is doing, could he then take his priority right to make a moderate livelihood out fishing for lobster, cod or whatever other species happens to be part of that priority right? Could he go into the New Brunswick forest and pick up a saw and go cutting after he was already making more than a moderate livelihood? Who figures these things out anyway? Would he be denied the right to participate in other resource industries as an Indian because that would move him beyond the basic necessities threshold?

Another point is that non-Indian fishermen do not and will not enjoy constitutional remedies for any loss of livelihood. The government therefore must compensate them fully for their loss of livelihood. But they are fishermen. Their families were fishermen for generations, going back as far as 13 generations. Most of us cannot trace our ancestry back that far. What did they do? They fished. Fishing became part of their tradition, part of their history, and they are denied it.

What are these people supposed to bother getting up in the morning for? To go down and check the bank account to see how it is doing when there is nothing in it? That is ridiculous. If they are given reasonable compensation, that is still a poor excuse for equality which would be a far better way to go.

The right to fish or gather has been defined as a communal right. An obvious question arises from that. It has always plagued socialist communal societies. If the right is communal, what does that mean? Does it mean that all can participate and must do so to benefit from the exercise of that right, or does it mean that those who do participate must share the wealth with those who do not?

We need answers to all of these questions. We cannot even begin to understand the implications of what has come down.

Unless the federal government can find a way, other than simply excluding non-Indians from participating in fisheries and other resource based industries, there will be ethnic conflict in this country now and in the future. Buy-outs are not an acceptable long term solution. It is a stop-gap measure.

In an article which everyone should read, "One country, two laws", written by Peter Worthington in the *Ottawa Sun*, in speaking of Indian affairs he states:

The only federal party with a sane and workable policy on this issue is the Reform Party. It would make all Canadians equal before the law regardless of racial descent.

• (1300)

I say hear, hear to that and so should every other member.

Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to speak to the motion today as it includes both agriculture and fisheries, two of the main industries in my province of Prince Edward Island. I have probably spent as much time on the fisheries committee as I have on the agricultural committee, so I have been asked today to address the part of the motion dealing with the amount of agricultural subsidies and subsidization that is going on in the world today.

We know about the root causes of the financial problems facing some of our farmers today, namely adverse weather and worldwide low prices for some commodities. These low prices are primarily a result of oversupply which has led to reduced demand in key markets such as Asia and Latin America. The oversupply has come about not just because of unfair trade practices but also because of some incredibly good harvests worldwide over the past few years which have put a great deal of high quality product on the market. Those inventories are still quite high.

This situation has been aggravated by the persistent use of trade distorting support by some of our major trading partners, especially the United States and the European Community. Farmers are not encouraged to grow crops in response to the realities of the marketplace in those countries and our farmers, as well as producers in other countries, are feeling the effects.

The motion before us suggests that the government has not been doing anything to address the serious issue of subsidies being provided to our competitors in the agricultural sector. I have to take issue with that for the government and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, in particular, have put much of their energy and resources over the past two years into developing a strong initial negotiating position to take to the world trade talks that are about to begin in Seattle. Those talks are absolutely crucial to our ability to bring about a fair and level playing field in which our producers can compete.

There is absolutely no doubt that Canadian producers are some of the most efficient, productive and innovative in the world. They have the business savvy to compete with the best and they can compete and win when the trading environment is fair. If we can rid the agricultural world of trade distorting subsidies, particularly export subsidies, Canadian farmers would be able to produce and invest with greater confidence.

While the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has been working to address the economic and weather related problems of Canadian farmers, he has also devoted a great deal of time and energy to working with our trading partners, with the objective of bringing some order and stability into the world marketplace. He

Supply

has taken every opportunity to remind his counterparts from major trading nations, particularly the European Community and the United States, that their actions can only prolong the serious problems faced by farmers.

It is not clear that the subsidies being provided by our competitors such as the United States are even helping those farmers all that much in the short term. There seem to be just as many concerns expressed by American producers about low prices and low incomes as we are hearing in Canada. As a matter of fact a witness this morning in the agriculture standing committee verified those facts.

The need to get rid of trade distorting subsidies is a critically important message for our trading partners to hear as we head into the WTO negotiations which start in Seattle in a couple of weeks. It is the message that we have been delivering every chance we get. I know the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food raised it, for example, when he hosted ministers from Japan, Australia, the European Union and the United States at a meeting in Montreal in September.

Going into the WTO talks Canada has been a world leader in setting out its goals for what needs to be accomplished in agriculture. That position includes the complete elimination of export subsidies, a substantial reduction of trade and production distorting domestic support including an overall limit and domestic support of all types, and real and substantial market access improvements for all agriculture and food products. As well we are defending Canada's right to maintain domestic orderly marketing systems such as the Canadian Wheat Board and supply and management for dairy and poultry products.

• (1305)

This position was arrived at after two years of extensive consultations with a broad cross-section of representatives from the agricultural and food industries and the provinces. This position reflects the trade interests of the Canadian agriculture and food sector as a whole across all commodities and all regions. It is a solid, unified initial position which I am confident will help to garner a better deal at the international trade table. By the way, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga West.

With this position Canada will play a strong and active role in influencing the direction and eventual outcome of the WTO negotiations. In fact we already have.

Shortly after announcing the Canadian position the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food met with the 15 agricultural exporting countries which make up the Cairns group. This group also included countries like Australia, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina. Coming out of that meeting the minister indicated that Cairns members had agreed to a common WTO negotiating front, namely, freer, fairer and more market oriented trade conditions.

In addition, both APEC and the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and Canada is a member of both those groups, have come out with resolutions calling for the elimination of export subsidies. This is what Canada and its allies will be pushing for when the negotiations get started in Seattle.

It is in Seattle that Canada will be cranking up the heat even more to convince all our trading partners of the need to let farmers make their decisions based on market signals rather than on government support levels. In this way we have been laying the groundwork for meaningful negotiations, negotiations that start smoothly and allow our negotiators to work with clear direction and steadfast commitment to the needs of our producers and that achieve good results.

I do not deny that we are getting into a long process. The WTO talks will not deliver changes overnight, but they are crucial to building a strong and competitive Canadian agricultural sector. The government is committed to reforming trade in the agricultural sector. It is something we have been building toward over the past several years and our efforts will only intensify from here on in.

As the WTO negotiations proceed the federal government will continue the partnership approach that led to the development of a unified national negotiation position by ensuring that industry and the provinces are consulted closely throughout the process. We are in this together, the federal government, the provincial governments and industry, in seeking solutions to the income problems of farmers over the long term.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the comments of the hon. parliamentary secretary. I have to agree the best resolution would be an open marketplace, a level playing field and no subsidies. I also have to tell the parliamentary secretary to wake up and smell the coffee.

He said that the minister had been talking at great lengths to other trading partners about getting rid of subsidies. The opposite is happening. In the European Union subsidies are being paid at an accelerated rate. In the United States there has been an announcement every week of another farm aid package, more moneys going into the farm economy.

The parliamentary secretary talked about how our position at the WTO will be accepted and will be achieved. That is five years at the very least of negotiations with the WTO.

What do we do in the meantime? Do we simply allow the farm crisis to continue? Do we allow the world market to be changed constantly by subsidies being paid by the European Union and the Americans? Is it simply that farmers in Canada should go by the wayside while we wait and let the minister talk about trade changes in the WTO?

Mr. Joe McGuire: Madam Speaker, as the member well knows, Canada has and is putting in place various mechanisms whereby our farmers will be subsidized through the NISA program, through crop insurance, through companion programs, and recently through AIDA dollars. Overall \$1.78 billion is being put into the program over the next two years.

The member for Brandon—Souris is a member of the agricultural standing committee. This morning's witnesses said that NISA is an example of a program which is envied by our neighbours to the south.

• (1310)

The Americans are looking to our program as the path for the future. They are looking to us to show the way to properly subsidize and properly assist our farmers when there is a precipitous drop in commodity prices. They are following our example. Their farmers are no better off with their ad hoc programs. In fact, a lot of them are a lot worse off with their ad hoc programs than we are with the negotiated cost share programs that are in place today.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have carefully listened to the words of my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and to his responses to questions.

In his speech he said that commodity prices are low because there has been over-production, and that the farmers are not growing crops that reflect the realities of the marketplace.

The government is not following the realities of the marketplace either with its subsidies. What are we to do when American or European competitors receive \$2.50 to Canadian farmers' \$1.00?

What are we to do when total agricultural support policies are \$140 per capita in Canada, as compared to \$360 in the United States and \$381 in Europe?

That too is reality. I also wonder, if there is an overproduction of agricultural products, what options besides diversification might be proposed to farmers to help them operate according to supply and demand.

[English]

Mr. Joe McGuire: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows well what we are doing. She also is a member of the agriculture standing committee. She knows that we have the crop insurance program. She knows that we have the NISA program, which is working very well. There are still \$122 million that could be triggered just in the province of Saskatchewan alone. That money is there waiting for this particular situation, a downturn in the incomes of the farmers.

Supply

She knows that the government together with farm groups, farm leaders and the provinces developed the agriculture disaster program. The same players and partners in agriculture will be putting in place a long term disaster program which will click in when situations like the one we are experiencing today come into effect.

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in this debate. I find the motion interesting. I am sure there must have been a lot of discussion in the Tory party caucus in trying to write this resolution. Sprinkled throughout it there are references to the fishing industry. It talks about Canada's food industry, but it primarily focuses on agriculture, as would be seen in some of the responses.

However, because of the very few number of seats the Tories have in the maritimes, I am sure there was a battle suggesting that they had better not just talk about agriculture and focus on western Canada. I believe yesterday the results in Saskatchewan would show that the Conservative Party is hardly on what any one might call a comeback. I believe it came in fourth. The Liberals did well in three other ridings, one in Ontario and two in Quebec, so we know that the people are generally satisfied with the programs.

I would like to discuss from the point of view of the fisheries a bit of the nonsense about the failure to provide leadership and the failure of the Conservative Party to seize this opportunity to actually say something important about what has happened to our fishing industry.

I recommend to all members a book they should read called *Lament for an Ocean*.

• (1315)

Far be it for me to quote too much from a book written by a journalist, one who is not necessarily supportive of Liberals or the government, and the name Mike Harris comes to mind. He is not the premier of Ontario but rather the journalist who wrote the book. I must give him credit because when one reads the book and the research that was done one can see a pattern that was developed. Frankly, it was developed under the leadership of Conservative governments and a minister. It is unfortunate to have to criticize someone who is not in this place any more to defend himself, but I am sure he is quite capable of defending himself, as we have seen, and that minister was John Crosbie.

The programs in place in the maritimes were such that they totally had blinkers on and allowed foreign freezer vessels to come in, rape the ocean, particularly off the coast of Newfoundland, and destroy the fishery. Why not take this opportunity with this small gathering of Conservatives from the maritimes to ask the government to do something that would actually help restore the cod fisheries? I do not see any mention of that. The motion mentions

Supply

solutions for Canada's fishery, but it focuses fundamentally on agriculture.

On the agricultural side of it, we know that there have been what I would have to carefully call some flip-flops by some hon. members. The sponsor of the motion, the hon. member for Brandon—Souris, actually said in *Hansard* "The U.S. government provided \$8.7 billion" in farm aid. He went on to ask "When will the minister use his influence to put forward similar resources?" Just seven days later, he was quoted as saying that he had never asked for more money to be added to the pot. I guess we misunderstood that. That was in reference to the money in the AIDA program.

We all know that the government has responded by increasing the funding for AIDA. It is never enough to satisfy members opposite but it is a response. The minister of agriculture, in a responsible way, has topped up that program. Notwithstanding the complaints I have heard about the bureaucracy and red tape, that money is flowing into the hands of Canadian farmers.

Because this is about food in the country, let me go back to the fishery. Our new minister has just announced a \$600,000 program to fund new aquaculture programs. That is not a lot of money but it is recognition of the importance of aquaculture, particularly given the damage caused to our natural fisheries throughout the east coast. There is a commitment there. I would like to see more of it.

My colleague, the hon. member for Sudbury, has a program where they want to raise Arctic char in an abandoned mine pit. Apparently all the science and research shows that the Arctic char that comes out of this technology is absolutely spectacular. A small investment at the local community level is needed to make that kind of thing work. Why would members opposite not call for the government to invest in something like that? It seems to me that is a productive thing, something that we could look at and something that should be supported.

I am also surprised that the member opposite did not take the opportunity to address something that I think is one of the great sins of our time, the reduction in the quotas and at one time the banning of the seal hunt. It is really bizarre if we look at why the cod is down. As my hon. friend from the east coast, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, would say "seals eat fish". It is amazing.

Why not look at the fact that there was a recent report to the committee on the situation with the seals? Let me just read about how seals are predators. The report states:

One of the most controversial aspects of the debate on seals is whether predation by harp seals is impeding the recovery of cod stocks.

Imagine anyone asking that question. If we want to create more food and more fish in the country, why do we not look at the fact

that there are over five million seals in the population? I believe that figure is three or four years old. The population is probably over six or seven million. They are destroying not only a fishery and a species but a way of life.

● (1320)

The committee went on to state:

None of the witnesses who appeared before the committee claimed that seals were the cause of the collapse of cod stocks, which they clearly attributed to both foreign and domestic overfishing.

The committee puts on blinders and says that even though it has restricted the catch by foreign fishing companies, by freezer trawlers, and even though it has taken the steps to correct the mistakes of former Tory governments in that area, it continues to refuse to believe that the seals are in fact predators that are destroying the cod fishery.

The committee goes on to state:

However, it was noted by the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council in their April 1999 report "that the single cod stock in the Northwest Atlantic considered recovered, namely, the southern Newfoundland/St-Pierre Bank stock, is the only stock that does not have a large number of seals occurring within its stock range".

That is pretty clear evidence to me. It basically states that the cod in that part of the world has recovered in terms of its population and size—and the size of the cod is a key factor—because they are not facing the predators in terms of the seals.

I have some other statistics. Do we want to find a way to support Canada's food industry, Canada's fishery? This says that grey seals are consuming between 5,400 and 22,000 tonnes annually of eastern Scotian shelf cod; harp seals may be consuming as much as 140,000 tonnes annually of northern cod; seals in the northern Gulf of St. Lawrence may have consumed as much as 68,000 tonnes of cod in 1996 alone; and, seals in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence may be consuming over 10,000 tonnes annually of cod. That is a lot of fish.

Why is it that we somehow feel the need to protect the seals to the tune where they are literally crawling across highways in Newfoundland, for goodness sake, coming right out of the water?

In 1997, the NAFO science community reported clearly that the seals consumed 108,000 tonnes of juvenile northern cod, those less than 40 centimetres, which represents 300 million fish. If we want to do something to help the fishery we should support the report of this council which says that the seal hunt should be increased by 50%. That may be drastic, but in reality that is a step that will allow the cod to recover, that will allow the fishery on the east coast to recover and that will allow the families in that part of the world to get back on the water to make a living so that they generate food for the rest of Canada.

Supply

I would have thought that would be the kind of policy that the Conservative Party would be interested in seeing so it could resolve the mess that it caused in its time in office.

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is always nice to hear the ineffectual backbencher from Mississauga get up and obviously have all of the answers. Actually, I thank him for speaking so eloquently.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Which am I, ineffective or eloquent?

Mr. Rick Borotsik: No, no. The member spoke eloquently about his ineffectiveness. However, he delivered a message that spoke to the deficiencies of his own government. He railed on about the policy that should be put into place to help rejuvenate the cod fishery and he looks to us to set that policy.

Where is the ineffective backbencher when he is needed to speak to the minister of fisheries who in fact should be putting in those policies? That is what this resolution speaks to, the mismanagement and the inability of the government to put in those policies to help not only rejuvenate and save the fishery but also to rejuvenate and save agriculture. I thank him for speaking on our behalf. I would like to ask him where his minister and his government are in implementing those very policies.

• (1325)

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, it is quite obvious that someone has to speak on behalf of the Conservative members. They seem to be incapable of doing it. This is their opposition day. As a result—if the member would just take a Valium for a moment—all I am suggesting is that they should have taken an opportunity to put some constructive ideas on the table. They did not do that.

What they want to do is try to pretend that they are friends of the western farming community when they know they are not their friends, and the results of last night's byelection proved that. They try to do that but, at the same time, they do not want to upset the east coast fishery because they have a number of members from that part of the country, the only part, I believe, where they actually have any members except for one member in Ontario.

I am just suggesting to the member that I am not afraid to stand up in my caucus and in this place and say that I think what that government did to the east coast fishery was a travesty. I think this government should take some steps, such as increasing the quota of the seal hunt, to see if we cannot help improve the fishing stock on the east coast.

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the speaker. This is the first time since I have

known him that he made a whole speech in the House and never mentioned my name. I feel a little hurt this morning.

I am sure the member would agree that the European Union, which is subsidizing its farmers a great deal, went through a period of time a few years back when there just was not any food on the shelves. It suffered a great deal in that regard. It is also pretty strong in the fact that it will never let that happen again. I can understand that, as I am sure he can.

We will go to the WTO negotiations to try to level the playing field. In order to do that, we are going to ask the EU to reduce its subsidies, to bring down its method of supporting its farmers. To do that, Canada may be asked to give something up.

The first question I have is does he have any idea what the European Union might expect Canada to give up in order to negotiate a deal?

The second question is with regard to the seal hunt, which I agree would be a good idea and a good solution. Would he be prepared to stand up to the interest groups that would want the seals protected and would come right on the heels of bringing in such legislation, or would he cave in like they usually do to small interest groups in their requests?

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, indirectly I did mention the member, although I did not mention him by name. I said that he was complaining earlier about some of the bureaucracy and the red tape by the farmers. I did sort of touch on it but I also had confidence that he would rise in his place to compliment me in some fashion. I am getting used to that.

I did stand up to IFAW, the International Fund for Animal Welfare. It threatened to sue me over remarks that I made where I accused its members of not being totally honest with the lobby that they were leading. Many members in this place received computerized phone calls to our offices lobbying us, passing out information that was totally false and telling members and senior citizens contributing \$10 that baby seals were being slaughtered on the banks off of Newfoundland when we know that is not true. In fact, it is against the law. The government made it against the law and levied over 100 charges. Of course there will be people who will break the law in that regard but we have to be tough on that.

I have certainly stood up to those interest groups and will continue to do so.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this afternoon to speak on the motion put forward by the Progressive Conservative Party.

Supply

This motion comprises a number of elements, the main ones being the financial difficulties currently being experienced by Canadian farmers, Ottawa's incompetence in dealing with this issue, the failure of the federal government to assume responsibility and leadership with respect to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R. v Marshall*, and the federal government's failed fisheries policies and its lack of vision.

I would like to share my time with my colleague from Lotbinière. This morning, my colleague from Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok spoke about fisheries.

Since we are sharing our time, I would like to spend time on the fourth point of the Progressive Conservatives' motion, that is, the lack of vision on the part of the government, something that very often results in a lack of leadership. I will relate this to a matter particularly dear to my heart, one I have spoken of quite frequently of late, and that is the matter of genetically modified foods. This is an issue in which the government has been very short on vision, and one that illustrates my thoughts very well.

First, it starts with inertia. For five years, our shopping baskets have contained genetically modified products, and up to now the government has not brought this to the attention of consumers. The delay is rather hard to explain and may be likened to a lack of transparency.

In the fall of 1997, when we were working on the matter, the agriculture committee recommended to the government unambiguously that there be mandatory labelling so consumers buying the products would know what they had in their baskets and what they were eating. Knowing what one is eating is a basic right.

The government has not acted since 1998, except to say that labelling is optional in Canada and that we should wait until the issue comes up for debate. But it did not, with the result that events have now overtaken us.

We therefore find ourselves in another kind of debate with scientists, Health Canada employees, and all sorts of people on one side or the other, while the consumer, who is at the heart of the debate, cannot get a straight answer.

What are the short, medium and long term effects on health? We do not have all the answers to this question. Furthermore, what are the effects on the environment and soil degradation? What are the socioeconomic and legal impacts? There has been no follow-up and, in this final and very progressive century of the millennium, I do not think that an entire population can be left in the dark. I do not know how the government sees this, but I see it as a complete lack of vision.

There are all sorts of underlying issues. There is a lot of talk about consumers because, as users of all these products, they are on the front line, but agricultural producers should also be mentioned. They are also becoming increasingly concerned, and their concerns

are twofold. Those producing genetically engineered food have questions about biological diversity.

What will happen if we continue to take this increasingly specialized approach? The diversity of seed available to farmers or producers is becoming extremely limited and is being controlled by a certain group of individuals, or companies, monopolizing the sale of agricultural products. This will inevitably lead to monoculture. In an agricultural context, it is a short leap from monoculture to the risk of a disease that can wipe out an entire crop.

Even those who are proactive on this issue and those who are now using genetically modified seed grain have questions, not all of which have been answered, although they should have been. This is the situation in which those farming with genetically modified organisms find themselves.

• (1335)

Then there are those involved in biological or traditional agriculture. They are ending up in a dangerous situation, because of their smaller fields, which will turn into veritable minefields, for pollen can be carried a very long way. In the spring, they were talking of one kilometre. Then a little later it was five, then twenty. This week I heard a figure of fifty.

How, then, is it possible to have the crops one desires in traditional agriculture, as in the case of Mr. Schmeiser, if one is in an area where there is airborne contamination? There is also a race for patents going on at the present time. All living things are on the verge of being patented. I do not know if this House is aware of the case of a mildly hallucinogenic plant that is used in the Amazon traditionally for medical and religious purposes. One day an American arrived on the scene and announced "This is a rather extraordinary plant, with major characteristics, so we are patenting it".

The Amazon natives can no longer obtain the plant—which is about as common as dandelions are here in Canada—because it is patented. All these matters relate to ethics. If there are no standards for labelling transgenic food, there is no code of ethics when it comes to discoveries in a rapidly expanding field which affects us all.

This shows a lack of vision, a lack of leadership, and I would venture to say as well a lack of commitment by the government. Let us look at the situation. Since 1993, the budgets have not changed, they have been shrinking continually, and we have reached the threshold we were at in 1993 for research and development budgets.

If there is no funding, no basic research, there is a void, but a void is always filled. So it was filled with a transfer of responsibility that the companies supported, because there was no government expertise, no government funding or independent scientists to do this sort of research.

It is strange, because the government is going to negotiate at the WTO, where they will be talking of export subsidies and domestic support, but they should be talking about international trade barriers too. Such major countries as Japan, the European Community, Korea, Australia, Brazil and in fact a whole series of countries are currently requiring labelling of products containing genetically engineered food.

What are we going to do in this market if there has been no leadership? We will again see a lack of vision resulting in us losing ground it will be hard to make up.

Another comment arising from the situation is that there is some confusion in federal infrastructures leading to a lack of accountability. The entire field of biotechnology is the responsibility of the Department of Industry, product approval is the responsibility of the Department of Health, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency reports to the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food. Yet no one deals with all the environmental problems, since in terms of accountability and responsibility, no one looks after this area at Environment Canada. This matter is the responsibility of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Bouncing the ball back and forth leads to a problem of accountability, and this is what I contend today. The motion by my colleague from the Progressive Conservative Party contained a lot of elements, including the lack of vision. I think we have a responsibility as parliamentarians, and we must bear this in mind.

[English]

Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, the hon. member has a very deep interest in food labelling. She has asked questions of the minister on a number of occasions and she has participated in the hearings of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on biotechnology and food labelling.

• (1340)

The European countries, that area of pristine food, mad cow disease, Belgian chicken, contaminated food. When we compare our food safety regime versus the people who are criticizing us for growing biotechnological GMO foods, I think Canada's record stands crystal clear as to who has the better food safety regime.

Can the member elucidate for us how she would implement a policy of mandatory labelling? Other countries in Europe have this on the books but they have been able to implement their policy. How would the member go about implementing such a policy in this country?

Supply

[Translation]

Ms. H el ene Alarie: Mr. Speaker, I would love to have the government's powers, because I would have introduced obligatory labeling long ago.

It is very simple. Two systems are necessary. Quebec, for example, has already instituted a system of food traceability. This requires being able to track food from the farm to the table. It is tracked in terms of whether it is transgenic, traditional or biological. This is how other countries operate.

When the hon. member speaks about the safety of food in this country, everything is fine, thank goodness, there are no problems, but we are still living in a world of risk management. I do not wish to be an alarmist, but we are not safe from everything.

So far, research and inspections are adequate. But if the government continues to pull back and leave all the responsibilities in the hands of companies, slaughterhouses or whatever, I have a serious concern.

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbini re, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the member for Louis-H ebert for all the work she is now doing on GMOs.

She has really led the way on this issue, which we all know is a very important one. There is talk about it in my riding of Lotbini re, which is a very agricultural riding. It is also considered an important issue because agriculture and health are intimately linked.

I have often complained that this government gives a lot of attention to trade agreements and finance, but completely overlooks the consumer. It overlooks what we are putting into our mouths.

My colleague from Louis-H ebert has set out on a crusade to bring this issue to the attention of the public, and I am proud of her. It is already having an impact all over Quebec. I hope it will reach as far as Ontario, for people are having trouble truly understanding the reality of Canadian and Quebec farm production.

I would like to spend a moment on the motion by my colleague for Brandon—Souris, which reads as follows:

That this House regrets the failure of the government to recognize the important of Canada's food industries—

I am going to express my thoughts on this situation. I wonder if the government is even aware that there is such a thing as a food industry in Canada, judging by its behaviour.

I will remind this government once again that we all worked together between September and December 1998. We brought in representatives of agriculture from the west and from the east; we heard representatives of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture;

Supply

we heard representatives of the UPA. We heard from everyone involved and we found a marvellous title for the report—maybe marvellous is a bit of an exaggeration, but a good title, one that I thought would really get things moving. I will give it again, because the people over there have poor memories “The Farm Income Crisis in Canada”.

I have spoken in committee or in the House on a number of occasions about this crisis, a term people have great difficulty understanding.

• (1345)

In preparing my speech, I looked up crisis in the *Petit Larousse* for three definitions. This is a fairly major entry, a whole long paragraph.

From it I selected three definitions. The first refers to a decisive or perilous period in a person's existence. A crisis is also defined as a difficult phase being experienced by a group. Third, when used with the adjective economic, it is defined as an imbalance between economic powers, in particular between production and consumption.

But I said to myself that even if the Liberals hear the definition of the word “crisis”, I will give them a bit of a break. I will relate it to the current situation and will go over each of the definitions to show them what a crisis really is.

A “decisive or perilous period” and we will add “in agriculture” in Canada and Quebec. In the case of “difficult phase being experienced by a group”, the group is Quebec or western farmers. In the case of the “economic crisis”, I think we are in a full blown crisis. I will reread the definition “an imbalance between economic powers, in particular between production and consumption”. This is the reason for today's debate.

The government does not understand what a crisis is. In December 1998, they were made aware of the situation. Nearly a year later, nothing has been done. Even with the links I have made, I am sure the government will remain silent.

This government lacks leadership. It lacks the courage of its convictions and it abdicates its responsibilities in the face of the current crisis. A crisis means there is an emergency. A crisis means there is a need for action. A crisis means it is time to put an end to inertia.

This government, however, has just found another argument for waiting rather than acting and taking decisions. It is saying “We have to be careful in the programs we will establish, because we are going to be negotiating on November 30 at the WTO, the world trade organization”.

When I read the morning papers, one headline read “WTO: minister creates confusion”. I was somewhat concerned. This

means once again that this government is really inconsistent and without vision. Its vision is to collect tens of billions of dollars and spend them in areas of provincial jurisdiction. That is the vision of this government: to have billions of dollars in its pocket and to let a situation such as currently exists in the west worsen. That is vision too.

Once again, however, the vision stops at the financial and economic levels. The government never talks of farm producers or consumers. How can we expect this government to have vision?

Coming back to the motion introduced by my colleague from the Progressive Conservative Party, it provides, and I quote:

—by failing to address the serious problems of Canada's agricultural producers, who are suffering from increasing subsidized competition—

Here again, where is Canada's leadership on the three important criteria that will guide the WTO negotiations? As for the decrease in funding, we have done our part. Our commitment under the GATT in 1995 was 15%. This has now climbed to 50%. But, in the meantime, the United States and the European community are refusing to assume their responsibilities.

As for reducing domestic measures, the question is where. We must not turn around and make our agricultural production vulnerable. We must reaffirm it, defend ourselves, and stand firm.

Finally, with respect to market access, we must know our products and defend our market. Not only must we defend economic principles, but we must understand agriculture. Once again, the members opposite are having trouble doing this.

I come back to the Progressive Conservative member's motion:

—by failing to address the serious problems of Canada's agricultural producers, who are suffering from increasing subsidized competition, rising input costs—

Earlier, the member for Louis-Hébert reminded us that financial assistance has been declining since 1993. Yet, costs are rising and we know that the industry is becoming increasingly specialized. There is a need for research and money, but the members opposite are living in a dream world.

• (1350)

Now, let us look at natural disasters. There is a disaster; it is noted; the affected farmers are asked to be patient and told that, when they file their income tax return, the government will look into it. Then the government gets busy juggling figures while the farmers have time to go belly up, as they have no way out.

This government is trying to convince us it can handle crises. This is ridiculous, because we are already close to one. Members can imagine what things would be like if there were really a crisis. The entire country would be in a real mess.

I am therefore calling upon this government once again to show some leadership, courage and vision, to show some sign of being a government capable of understanding the situation. The year is not 1949 or 1959; it is 1999, with the third millennium just around the corner. Yet this government continues to maintain rigid policies, policies that lack any flexibility and continue to heavily penalize agricultural producers.

I maintain that this government has chalked up a total failure in its vision, in its approach to the reality of Canada's and Quebec's farmers, and in its strategy. I say to my Liberal friends, wake up before it is too late.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: There being no further members rising, it being 1.55 p.m. it is my duty to inform the House that the proceedings on the motion have expired.

I would suggest that we begin Statements by Members. Is that agreeable to the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS REGISTRATION

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was proud to open the newest one stop business registration service for the SUCCESS program in Vancouver last week. The SUCCESS program allows new and existing entrepreneurs to register their businesses in one place at one time. It is a fine example of government cutting red tape for small business owners and I am sure that is something we can all be proud of.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I call this a tribute to the finance minister, "The boy who would be king":

There once was a finance guy, we all know who,
He taxed us all heavily, both me and

others who begged him to give them a break
but he told them rudely to jump in the

queue behind lots of his Liberal friends
A queue that was Liberal beginning to

enter the conscience of taxpayers all
so much that they each made a telephone

payment including that bad GST
the one that reminded us both you and

S. O. 31

Ministers who can remember the time
when one of their number was forced to

remember the words that had caused such a flap
to kill and abolish and otherwise

scrape up excuses for why they didn't act
just one of the times they didn't stick to the

favourite line of our finance guy
I'll lower your taxes one day, would I

liven things up with a tax cut or two
I'll tell you right now that's one thing he won't

bother to help out the average guy
so long as he pulls the wool over their. . .

I guess the finance guy, till his last breath
will tax us and tax us and tax us to

much.

* * *

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF TOLERANCE

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the international day of tolerance as declared by the United Nations in 1995.

This day serves as a reminder of our obligation to inform society and make it aware that diversity and individual differences are an asset to our world.

[*English*]

We must extinguish ignorance and fear, the main sources of intolerance, through education, the most effective means of prevention. We must work hard to remove all barriers and promote equality in order to allow tolerance to thrive. As the world becomes more diverse and interdependent, tolerance becomes fundamental to the survival of mankind.

Canada has prospered in diversity. We, as Canadians, have succeeded to live in harmony, to grow as a multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic nation, and to promote and be the role model for a tolerant society.

Our duty as Canadian parliamentarians is to prevent the intolerance of today from becoming the conflict of tomorrow. Let us strive in unity to achieve worldwide tolerance.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year for the first time in 12 years there was an increase in the defence budget aimed specifically at improving the remuneration

S. O. 31

and quality of life of our Canadian forces. This badly needed increase should be only the first in a series of careful reinvestments by our government in Canada's military.

At a time when Canada is more committed than ever to our vital role as a peacekeeper, it is essential that our forces be trained and equipped as well as possible. Make no mistake, our forces do an excellent job with the people and the equipment they currently have. However, they are stretched to the limit and we must address that fact.

The people of Canada understand and agree that it is time to reinvest in our military. It is time to reinvest in our military. It is time to reinvest in our military.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government thinks that Canadians' paycheques are not really their own. Liberals believe that one-half of every paycheque should be confiscated from the person who earned it. The Liberals are ripping off Canadians.

When my wife and I were first married, many years ago, we decided that she would be a full time mom and I would earn the family income. At that time we were able to meet our needs on my modest salary, including purchasing our first home. That is because my pay stub tax bite was only about 15%. Now Canadian taxpayers are losing nearly half of their income to the taxman.

Over the last 30 years Canadians have paid an increasing proportion of their earnings in taxes to heavy-handed, uncaring, uncompassionate Liberal and Tory governments. Canadians want to keep more of the money they work so hard to earn.

The Liberals keep saying that they have lowered taxes, but the pay stub evidence shows that is not factually correct. It is time for the Liberals to either lower taxes or get out.

* * *

YOUTH VIOLENCE

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, two nights ago a 15 year old Toronto youth died tragically in what appears to be a brutal, random, unprovoked attack of violence.

Matthew Baranovski and his friends appear to have been minding their own business when they were set upon by a larger group for no apparent reason and the community is in shock.

Now the experts and the media are wringing their hands in horror, asking what is happening to our youth. I have news for them. This is nothing new.

Seven years ago my son Jesse suffered a similar fate under very, very similar circumstances. The entire country was shocked with the murder of Reena Virk in 1997. On Halloween last year Clayton McGloan was swarmed, beaten and stabbed to death in Calgary. Last June Jonathon Wamback was viciously beaten in Newmarket and left in a coma. Fortunately he survived and will hopefully recover. I could go on and on but my time is limited.

Seven years ago I said that Jesse would not be the last, and nothing has changed. On behalf of all parents who have lost sons or daughters to youth violence, our hearts go out to Matthew's family. But sadly, Matthew Baranovski will not be the last, and still this government continues to tinker.

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SASKATOON—ROSETOWN—BIGGAR

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we can learn much from democracy. Take, for example, the Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar byelection.

We learn that hateful, underhanded, dirty election tricks not only serve to undermine Canadians' faith in our democratic process, they do not work. We learn that when a federal government cynically turns its back on communities suffering the worst agricultural crisis since the great depression, those communities not only remember, they take action. But most of all we learn that when a community wants a representative who stands up for its interests, who will not abandon that community in its time of crisis, there is only one choice: the New Democratic Party of Canada.

● (1400)

On behalf of the NDP caucus, congratulations to the voters of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar on electing their new member of parliament, Dennis Gruending.

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DIABETES

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November is diabetes month in Canada. Diabetes is a chronic disease that has no cure and is a leading cause of death by disease in Canada.

People develop diabetes when their body no longer makes any or enough insulin or is unable to properly use the insulin it produces. There is also a possibility for women to get diabetes temporarily during pregnancy which greatly increases the chances that they will develop it permanently.

Insulin is a hormone made by the pancreas which breaks up the sugar we eat so it can get into our cells and provide our body with energy. For those with diabetes this process does not occur naturally and they are forced to get insulin injections to maintain the proper balance of sugar in their blood and in their cells.

As we all know, diabetes is a horrible disease and there is much research and work to be done in this area. National diabetes month gives all Canadians the opportunity to learn more about this disease. We must continue to put money toward research to find a cure for diabetes and at least until we find that cure, to find methods to improve the life of those battling this disease.

* * *

VISIT TO AFRICA

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell this House about my emotional tour through a period of history where African children, women and men were captured, shackled and transported as part of the 18th century slave trade.

This slave colony I visited on Gorée Island is located three miles from Dakar, the capital city of Senegal. The historical site is a reminder of the atrocities, the suffering and the humiliation endured by millions of Black people who were captured against their will, forcibly held, then shoved on to ships to be sold as slaves in the new world.

Iron shackles, leg braces, weight balls, neck and arm locks left behind the reminders of the oppression and the rape of human dignity during this shameful period.

Let us never forget this horrendous human episode. Let Gorée Island stand as a place to remind us, lest we forget that we are all created equal.

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[Translation]

LOUIS RIEL

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Louis Riel day.

[English]

On November 16, 1885 at 8 a.m. Louis Riel climbed the stairs to the scaffold, the trap door snapped open and Riel was dead.

I had the privilege this morning of attending in the presence of the Governor General of Canada and other dignitaries, a solemn and thoughtful celebration of the life of Louis Riel.

Louis Riel was branded a traitor to Canada but in fact he was no traitor. He was a hero who stood up for his people and his beliefs. He was a victim of the prevailing prejudices of his time.

[Translation]

This was the life and death of the man we recognize as the founder of Manitoba, the man we recognize today as the defender of the rights of the Metis and the French Canadians.

S. O. 31

NIOBEC MINE

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to pay tribute to the success of the Niobec mine in Saint-Honoré. It has won a major prize in the Quebec Énergie competition, awarded by the Association québécoise de maîtrise de l'énergie.

I would like to congratulate the entire team of electricians, who made possible the installation of a new system to heat the underground galleries of the mine, thereby reducing energy consumption and protecting the environment.

By using modern technology, the mining industry is now up to speed with the third millennium. This award is recognition of the fact.

Congratulations once again to the Niobec mine and its employees for their continued efforts to protect our environment. This is proof that the environment and the economy go hand in hand.

* * *

[English]

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have some words of advice for the Minister of the Environment on his proposals for endangered species legislation: proceed with caution. Taking the heavy-handed approach to landowners will solve nothing in addressing the root problems with protecting endangered species.

• (1405)

The federal government must apply a balanced approach to any future legislation that has the potential to have a detrimental impact on the agricultural industry. All stakeholders must be involved, especially agriculture, in the legislation process in order for this balanced approach to succeed.

Criminal sanctions and non-compensation for farmers would do little to advance the environmental cause. It would only create more division between sectors.

If the Minister of the Environment really wants to make an impact in his portfolio, might I suggest that he actually take the advice of the stewards of the land and develop a balanced approach to endangered species.

* * *

[Translation]

1998 ICE STORM

Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 5, Quebecers saw once again that the Liberal government honours its commitments.

On that date, the government handed Quebec a cheque for \$100 million to cover the cost of damages that occurred during the

S. O. 31

January 1998 ice storm. This brings to \$350 million the assistance that Quebec has received under this program.

The money is going directly to the Government of Quebec, to pay for many so-called extraordinary expenditures. It will be up to the Government of Quebec to reimburse the municipalities, who are anxious to get what is coming to them.

This is another good example of the effectiveness of the Canadian government's presence, which was much appreciated by the people of Quebec in their hour of need.

* * *

[*English*]**BYELECTIONS**

Mr. Rick Limoges (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that members on this side of the House will be pleased to join me in congratulating the new members of parliament who won the byelections in York West, Mount Royal and Hull—Aylmer last night.

I know from personal experience the many challenges and interesting developments that face candidates for the government party in a byelection. I am pleased to see that my three new colleagues won their respective byelections with far more comfortable margins and enjoyed their victories much earlier in the evening than I did.

For those who may have lost track, these three byelection victories give the government 14 wins in 17 byelections since winning its first mandate in 1993.

[*Translation*]

The recent victories are an indication of the high level of Canadians' trust in and satisfaction with this government and our Prime Minister. I know that the members on this side look forward to working with the new members so as to continue to provide good government and improve the quality of life of all Canadians.

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[*English*]**1979 MISSISSAUGA TRAIN DERAILMENT**

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago last Wednesday, during the evening of November 10, 1979, an event took place that is now known as the Miracle of Mississauga.

A 106-car freight train carrying explosives and poisonous chemicals was derailed at the Mavis Road rail crossing. Over the next few days 218,000 people were evacuated from private homes, nursing homes and hospitals. Our city became a virtual ghost town.

Amazingly after seven days, through the diligent hard work and untiring efforts of Mississauga's emergency service crews, com-

bined with the assistance of several outside personnel, no lives were lost and our citizens returned.

Though today there are no visual reminders of this potential disaster, Mississaugans will never forget the Miracle of Mississauga.

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[*Translation*]**CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS**

Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, CSIS is busy burning secret documents, losing them in phone booths, leaving them in the back seat of cars while the secret agent attends a hockey game. Canada's secret service is secret in name only.

Yet we must not be too quick to cast a stone at these James Bonds and Mata Haris. After all, they have been set an example from higher up.

The federal government itself seems to be a past master at leaking confidential information, committee reports in particular. However, when it comes to compliance with the Access to Information Act, this same government gets obsessed with secrecy. Secret material falls into the hands of the public, while material that is public becomes secret.

It is understandable that Canada's secret agents do not know which way is up. After all, if everything that ought to be public were to become secret, most public servants would have to be replaced by secret agents. And then the Liberal government, mightily relieved at last, would no longer have to answer any embarrassing questions.

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[*English*]**AGRICULTURE**

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government does not care. So said Janice Archdekin of Landis at a kickoff meeting in Biggar, Saskatchewan to gather a wide spectrum of opinions and solutions across the prairies.

The Reform Party will be sponsoring a series of meetings to gather rural people together to get their input and urge the Prime Minister to tour the west and hear from those Canadians who have been hardest hit in recent years from rising input costs and falling prices in the agriculture sector.

● (1410)

We would like to see the Prime Minister come to the small towns and local halls to hear about the issue firsthand. Of course, he can send his entourage ahead if he likes. They should probably avoid the four star hotels and the PGA golf courses. That is not likely where the farmers or the answers will be found.

We intend to gather a wide range of opinions from producers and suppliers as well as their families on how to put agriculture primary producers on a permanent track of prosperity and sustainability. We know we will hear about foreign subsidies, taxes and user fees. What we do not know is if we will ever hear from the government that it recognizes the problem, let alone that it cares.

* * *

LOUIS RIEL

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to commemorate one of our colleagues who has fallen. He served in the second and third parliament and his name was Louis Riel. He was a duly elected member of parliament.

I challenge the government of the day to look into the future, to share what this person would have contributed to this parliament if he had been able to deliver a speech in this House of Commons, which he was denied. I challenge this government to open its doors, to open its mind, to open its heart and its spirit to unite this country among the aboriginal people who held this land in trust for the generations to come.

I welcome the possibility that Louis Riel can be honoured in the Library of Parliament. Maybe the circle building of the Library of Parliament could be a symbol of unity of this country in the future.

[*Editor's Note: Member spoke in Cree.*]

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[*Translation*]

BUDGET SURPLUSES

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to see the fruit of their labours show up on their paycheque. They are fed up working for governments.

This government promised to scrap the GST in 1993. Instead, once again this year the GST is bringing \$24 billion into its coffers, on top of the benefits of free trade, on top of the accumulated surplus in the employment insurance fund, on top of the 40 income tax hikes.

The government must stop playing with numbers in order to hide major surpluses at the expense of the workers. The government is not a bank. I realize it would be asking too much for it to keep its promises about doing away with the GST.

It must, however, give Canadians back the desire to work, by leaving them with some money in their pockets as a result of lower income and other taxes. The purpose of the GST was then and is now to reduce taxes.

S. O. 31

[*English*]

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the University of Guelph on being ranked as Canada's best comprehensive university by *Maclean's* magazine.

The U of G definitely deserves top honours. Its faculty and staff are very dedicated and extremely talented. Its students are among the best and the brightest.

The impact of research conducted at the U of G in the fields of agricultural science, veterinary science, minerals, biotechnology and others stretches across Canada and all around the world.

I say to everyone at the University of Guelph that once again they have made all of Guelph—Wellington very proud. We are lucky to have such a world class institution in our community.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the health care system disintegrating around them, Canadians anxiously await federal Liberal action and leadership. Instead they get more of the same empty promises and vague commitments.

There is no sign that the Liberals' two-pronged attack on medicare and health protection will ease up. The government simply replays its last budget mantra about investing in health care, but Canadians know that with the Liberals in charge, it will take five years to get back to where we were in 1995.

The Liberals replay their election promise on home care and pharmacare but there is still no legislation. They promised to fix food safety, yet they dump food inspection into the hands of a marketing agency.

We are clearly in a rut under the government, headed for two tier health care and a loss of our health protection system. Meanwhile children are dying from E. coli bacteria, infected carcasses can still enter our food system, and the government still will not give a choice to Canadians about genetically engineered foods.

Today Canadians say loudly and clearly that they do not want more hollow promises, they want action.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, recently in London, Ontario at the fiscal and economic update, the Leader of the Official Opposition told the story of how he had received a

Oral Questions

pay stub from a millwright in Saskatoon. That pay stub revealed what the government refuses to acknowledge, which is that taxes are eating up the majority of Canadians' pay.

• (1415)

We are asking that Canadians help us make the point to the finance minister that this cannot continue. We are asking Canadians to send us copies of these pay stubs that show all their pay going toward taxes. They can do that by faxing 613-947-8885 and helping us make the point to the finance minister that taxes in Canada have to come down.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Nisga'a treaty trenches inequality under the law. It establishes two tier citizenship. It fails to protect the rights of aboriginal women and it denies aboriginal private enterprisers the tools for economic development.

These are all very serious flaws, yet the government is cutting off debate on this treaty in parliament. It is limiting the public hearing process in British Columbia and it is even skewing the list of witnesses in its own favour.

Why is the government so afraid of parliamentary scrutiny and so afraid of public input that it will not allow Canadians to have their full say on the Nisga'a treaty?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the democratic process is being followed through the debates in the House and in committee. We have had second reading. Committee hearings are taking place. We will have report stage and third reading. Then the other place will consider the matter. The democratic process is proceeding.

If I am not mistaken, the committee itself agreed to the list of witnesses. If I am mistaken on that I will correct it, but I understand that what is happening with respect to the committee is based on an agreement among the members.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister's answer is completely unacceptable to the people of British Columbia including provincial Liberal leader Gordon Campbell.

In correspondence with the Prime Minister, Mr. Campbell said he found the limited hearing process in B.C. and the skewing of

witnesses unacceptable. He described the limiting of parliamentary debate on the Nisga'a treaty as an unacceptable slight to British Columbians and to all Canadians.

Why will the government not accept the advice of the provincial Liberal Party in British Columbia that its entire handling of the Nisga'a treaty is flawed and unacceptable?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now we have seen everything. First there is their effort for the United Alternative. Now the leader of the Reform Party is supporting the B.C. provincial Liberals. It is amazing.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, more to the point, why is the deputy minister not supporting the provincial Liberals in British Columbia?

The Nisga'a treaty is of such wide-ranging importance to aboriginals and non-aboriginals that it should be submitted to a province wide referendum in that province.

The treaty establishes a new level of government. It establishes two tier citizenship. It abandons the principle of equality before the law. It creates taxation without representation and fails to protect the rights of aboriginal women and entrepreneurs. If these are not sufficient reasons to hold a referendum in B.C. on the Nisga'a treaty, what would be?

Hon. Robert D. Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that the Reform Party, for example, continues to say that women somehow are not represented or are not protected in the treaty.

If the leader of the Reform Party ever read the treaty itself, he would know that provincial legislation applies to the Nisga'a women as it does to all women in British Columbia. That leader would know, if he read the treaty, that the charter applies equally to the Nisga'a people as it does to all Canadians.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows because of the treaty that people cannot own private property. I think that would affect women as well.

The government assures us that it is no problem absolutely that women's rights will not be protected in the treaty. It says we should not worry about the fact that non-Nisga'a people living on this new land will be taxed by a government they cannot even vote for. It says that the fact the constitution will be changed probably should not bother anyone either.

Rubbish. If the government is so comfortable with Nisga'a treaty deal, why will it not give a B.C. wide referendum on this issue?

• (1420)

Hon. Robert D. Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it quite interesting the

Oral Questions

hon. member would suggest that somehow the Nisga'a people will be able to tax non-Nisga'a people. In fact it is very specific in the agreement that will not happen.

Another reason this party is different from that party is that we do not need referendums. What we need is leadership. The government is ready to lead and we will lead by example not to have a referendum.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, here is the picture of leadership by example. What a sight for sore eyes.

The government is entrenching things that have never been entrenched before and knows that it is undemocratic. It could hardly be used as a shining example of democracy and leadership by example. It is ramming this through with no debate in the House. It has organized a series of committee meetings that the B.C. Liberal leader himself called a sham. Then it is to amend the constitution just to call it kosher.

Why is the government so afraid of the words and practice of democracy that it will not put this to a B.C. wide referendum? Why not?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has answered the question as to why there should not be a referendum. It is that the premises on which she bases her call for a referendum are totally wrong.

She says the Nisga'a treaty amends the constitution. It does not amend the constitution. She says it harms women's rights. It does not harm women's rights. The hon. member on this, as in so many other matters, is wrong, wrong, wrong.

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[Translation]

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in unveiling the government's position vis-à-vis WTO negotiations, the Minister for International Trade made three points, which seem to be irreconcilable, to say the least.

First, he said that nothing was excluded. Then, he said that he was retaining his full authority to regulate the health and education sectors. Finally, he said that he was not seeking any exemption.

Could the minister now tell us the government's real position in these negotiations?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's position is absolutely clear when it comes to health and education services. I believe this is what the Bloc Quebecois leader is referring to.

There is no question of negotiating Canada's public health or education services. They are not up for discussion. But, if other countries wish to discuss these services in the context of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, they may, on a voluntary basis, make commitments in a number of areas. Canada will not be making any such commitments.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would therefore like to know why the minister is not seeking an exemption in case all countries decide to negotiate this issue, which would in fact be very surprising.

Will the minister be seeking an exemption with respect to anything public, with areas such as health and education?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the General Agreement on Trade in Services is an agreement with an ascending list, which is to say that it is not up to Canada to decide that certain other countries will not speak about certain services if, in their own interest, they wish to conduct international trade in them.

What I am saying is that, since membership is voluntary, we do not wish to prevent other countries from speaking about this. But, since Canada's participation is voluntary, we have no intention of making commitments with respect to public health or education services.

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when questioned yesterday, the Minister of International Trade was very confused and, especially, very vague on the government's position at the WTO on health and education. This is no surprise, it is not even the federal government's jurisdiction.

How can the minister claim to accurately represent the interests of Canadians in the areas of health and education, in the case of the GATS, for example, when it is not the federal government but the provinces that have expertise and jurisdiction in these areas?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely why I held a very worthwhile working meeting with all the provincial ministers of trade on October 7.

Officials meet weekly with provincial governments precisely in order to be absolutely certain that Canada's position accurately reflects the needs and interests of all the provinces in our country.

• (1425)

I can assure you that, for the moment, we are absolutely confident of arriving together with a strong voice in Seattle in order to protect and promote the interests of all Canadians.

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that did not prevent the premiers from unanimously asking, in the latest

Oral Questions

provincial premiers' conferences, to present their viewpoints at the WTO table.

The government has said once again that it wants to negotiate in areas not under its jurisdiction. Will the minister agree to not make any commitments in the areas of health and education without provincial agreement, because this is provincial responsibility, not his?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear: the Government of Canada has no intention of making a commitment without consulting the provinces.

This is why we are working very closely with the provinces. I told the provincial ministers in recent weeks that we will work very closely together, and it is vital.

I would like to point out to the member for Charlesbourg that at the negotiating table, Brussels speaks for the European Union, including in areas under the jurisdiction of the national governments of members of the European Union.

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[English]

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are eight days away from the anniversary of the Broadbent resolution, the unanimous resolution of this House to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. This was to be Canada's millennium project, and yet today to Canada's great shame hundreds of thousands more, not fewer, children are living in poverty.

The finance minister was among those who made that solemn commitment 10 years ago. Will the finance minister today commit to eliminating child poverty, come hell or high water?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is very concerned about child poverty. Witness the \$5 billion a year that go into the Canada child tax benefit. Witness the \$2 billion that come July will be part of the national child benefit. Witness the \$9 billion in total that include programs like CAPC, prenatal nutrition, and focusing on Inuit and aboriginal health. Child poverty is a priority for the government.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting to hear, come hell or high water. The facts remain. There are 1.4 million children living in poverty, third world rates of infant mortality among aboriginal communities and families with children as the fastest growing group among the homeless. These are the shameful facts.

Will the finance minister commit to targets and timetables to eliminate child poverty, come hell or high water?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would just reread the Speech from the Throne she would see the government is committed to dealing with children and the issue of child poverty.

There will be a significant additional investment to the national child benefit. We will be working hand in glove with the provinces to make sure that it focuses on low income families with children.

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CSIS

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, we were informed yesterday that the solicitor general was informed immediately about this breach of national security. He chose not to inform the head of SIRC, Paule Gauthier. The ensuing damage control and spin doctoring saw the Prime Minister say that this was no big deal.

The government's flippant attitude to a national security crisis is appalling. Since the minister did not see fit to inform the head of SIRC, can he tell us when he informed the Prime Minister's Office and when he got in touch with the director of security services, Ward Elcock?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, the director of CSIS, Mr. Elcock, informed me.

I can also inform my hon. colleague that SIRC does not need my notice to evaluate or review any files. It has the mandate from the House to review the files, and that is exactly what it is doing. It has done that for the past 15 years and it does not need any input from me to do so.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is sounding more and more like an Austin Powers episode, *The Spy Who Shagged Us*.

We need truth or consequences from the minister. When will he tell us about the status of the search for the missing CSIS documents? Just how many CSIS agents are out there now engaging in a search and destroy mission on a Toronto metropolitan dump?

● (1430)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell my hon. colleague that the director of CSIS assured me that all necessary steps would be taken to ensure strict adherence to security procedures.

That was three weeks ago and he assured me again today.

*Oral Questions***NISGA'A TREATY**

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Nisga'a treaty assigns 25% of Nass River salmon to the Nisga'a people. There are four other bands with claims to Nass River salmon.

This treaty will fundamentally change the way we allocate resources in this country for all time. Given the significance of these changes, will the Prime Minister not allow the people of British Columbia to have their say in a referendum?

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's numbers are incorrect. It is not a percentage, it is 60,000 sockeye.

To reallocate those we will be retiring licences from the commercial fleet, so it will not take away from the commercial fleet. Of course, the percentage will depend on the abundance of fish.

The majority of members of the House and all members on this side of the House are proud of the Nisga'a treaty and we will make sure we go through with it.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as usual the minister has his numbers wrong.

The fact is that the Nisga'a people had a vote on this treaty. Why can the people of British Columbia not have and enjoy the same privilege?

Hon. Robert D. Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they do, in this House.

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[Translation]

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the European Union negotiates on behalf of the European countries, the Minister of International Trade must realize that it cannot require any of its member countries to be committed without its explicit consent.

Are we to understand from the minister's response just now that he is prepared to conclude nothing relating to health and education without the explicit agreement of each of the provinces, Quebec included?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you of one thing. In the fields of health and education, the General Agreement on Trade in Services fully allows Canada not to go that route if this is not what its policy and its government wishes.

Our government is very clear on this. There is no question, in the trade in services on which we are to commit on a voluntary basis, of our committing to going that route, and the provinces are unanimously on side with me on this.

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I find the minister very quick to admit that the provinces are unanimously on side with him on this. Let him make the effort to check that, and to do so after there has been some negotiation.

Similarly, can the minister make a commitment to respond to Quebec's demands and to ensure that there is no negotiation with the WTO on culture?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been working in close collaboration with my colleague, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, toward a new instrument in the realm of culture.

Recently, I received a letter from the Government of Quebec indicating that it recognized the need we felt as a government to continue this work toward a new instrument, in order to truly promote our very important cultural diversity.

We also hope that other international organizations such as the World Trade Organization will also acknowledge the government's right to promote cultural diversity.

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[English]

CSIS

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, we know that top secret documents were stolen from a CSIS operative. In the minister's own words, he received a report from CSIS immediately.

I remind him that section 20, paragraph 2 of the CSIS act says specifically that the minister in turn must send the report with his comments to the Attorney General of Canada and SIRC. He did not do this. Why did the minister break the law?

The Speaker: I ask members to be very judicious in their choice of words.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I was informed by the director of CSIS, he also informed me that the inspector general was conducting an investigation, CSIS was conducting an investigation, and the process was proceeding as it should proceed.

• (1435)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I will read section 20(2) to the solicitor general again. It says that the minister in turn must send the report with his comments to the

Oral Questions

Attorney General of Canada and to the Security Intelligence Review Committee.

He did not do that. He received a report from CSIS. He did not send the report to the Security Intelligence Review Committee. Is that not a breaking of this statute?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to my hon. colleague, the director of CSIS verbally indicated to me what happened and at the same time he indicated to me that the inspector general of CSIS was conducting an investigation and that CSIS was conducting an investigation.

* * *

[Translation]

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the ministers of finance unanimously called on the federal government to raise the level of transfers for health care and education spending by \$3.7 billion.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Will he admit that he has already cut too much in the transfers to the provinces for health care, in particular, and that he is therefore responsible for most of the problems in all the provinces and that his priority is to re-establish the transfers as he was asked to do by his provincial and territorial colleagues?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of priority, it is very clear, when we look at what the government has done in the past year, that the transfers are certainly very important. Health is of vital importance.

As regards yesterday's finance ministers meeting, I think everyone is satisfied that matters are fine at both federal and provincial levels. We have to remember that the provinces cut significantly at the municipal level. Now that we have the opportunity to work together, I hope that all three levels of government will be included.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the provincial and territorial finance ministers recognized that the federal government must reduce its enormous debt.

They recognized at the same time that the priority of the federal government, before it spends on other programs that are not its responsibility, is essentially to re-establish the transfers for health care and education and that this priority must guide the Minister of Finance and his government.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not exactly how I read their meeting. They said not only that

we should reduce the debt and taxes but they advocated an infrastructure program as recommended in the throne speech.

* * *

[English]

CSIS

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the one simple way this parliament keeps a hold on the executive is through the law.

One of our laws, section 20(2) of the CSIS act, states that the minister must send the report with his comments to the Attorney General of Canada and SIRC. Did the minister comply with section 20(2) of the CSIS act?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated a number of times in the House, CSIS is conducting an investigation. When I receive the report I will act accordingly.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite apparent that the minister did not comply with the basic statutes governing CSIS for which he is responsible. The next logical question, if the minister can follow this, is: Why did the minister not comply with section 20(2) of the CSIS act?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first thing the Reform Party ought to do is accurately cite the section of the act in question, and the context.

The section in question states:

If the Director is of the opinion that an employee may, on a particular occasion, have acted unlawfully in the purported performance of the duties and functions of the Service under this Act, the Director shall cause to be submitted a report in respect thereof to the Minister.

Then the clause arises about it going to the attorney general.

• (1440)

My hon. friend has not stated that the report to the solicitor general was of this kind. In fact, the solicitor general has told the House that investigations are going on in this matter, so at best the questions of the Reform Party are highly premature.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we read in the *National Post* that this is the fourth time CSIS has got its foot in it.

On one occasion, officers lost information about a west coast surveillance mission. On another, they left strategic information in a telephone booth. On a third, they tried to burn classified documents in a fireplace.

Oral Questions

My question is for the Solicitor General of Canada. In the face of such a disaster, is the minister going to ask senior officers of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to appear before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to answer for their actions?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated previously, the director of CSIS has indicated that the necessary steps have been taken to protect security. He also indicated to me that CSIS was conducting an investigation and the inspector general was conducting an investigation.

What I ask my hon. colleague to do is to let the process unfold.

* * *

[Translation]

EARTHQUAKE IN TURKEY

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, Turkey suffered its second earthquake in three months. Almost 3,000 people were injured and 450 died.

Can the Minister for International Cooperation tell the House whether Canada is in a position to send humanitarian aid and Canadian rescue workers to Turkey?

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, immediately after the earthquake I approved a \$250,000 humanitarian aid program through the International Red Cross. In addition, we sent two members of the rescue team from Vancouver to work along with the United Nations. As well, we were very active in the earthquake that Turkey had in August, when we sent \$1 million, plus the DART team, plus the firefighters to aid with that situation.

I spoke yesterday with the representative of the Vancouver team and he told me that things were reasonably calm now, that they were doing well and that he would be on his way back home within the next couple of days.

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the House leader for the government was wrong when he told the editorial board of the Vancouver *Sun* that the official opposition supports the elections act.

Bill C-2 is supposed to be fair and non-partisan, but it slaps a gag law on the voters, it reinstates the unfair 50 candidate rule and it is riddled with patronage appointments for the government's friends. Even the Chief Electoral Officer said he would not recommend it to

a third world country. No one except the House leader seems to like it.

I would like to know why he is publicly exaggerating support for the bill.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member, the critic for the official opposition on electoral matters. I want to assure the House that I will never accuse him of supporting good legislation in the future.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer said that it is critical that he be given the power to appoint his own returning officers based on merit, but the government insists on appointing its own political friends to those crucial positions.

The official opposition cannot support the bill and the Chief Electoral Officer says it is not fit for a third world country. Why exactly is the minister so enthusiastic about it?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very good bill. It has been stated so by many people who appeared before the parliamentary committee. The member, who pretends to be an expert on such matters, will know that what I am saying is totally accurate. He will know as well that Canada's election laws are already excellent. They have been utilized elsewhere in the world as examples for democracy. He knows that. We are striving to make this law better.

It is too bad that the Reform Party is once again going to isolate itself from the rest of Canadians on this issue.

* * *

• (1445)

TRADE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, global corporations are itching to profit from Canada's schools and hospitals. The federal government is poised for the first time ever to put health and education on the WTO table. Canadians do not buy that the trade minister can make it easier for wealthy investors to profiteer from health care and education without sacrificing our schools and hospitals. The trade minister cannot have his cake and eat it too.

Will he change his position and push for a complete carve out of health and education so that all countries can keep private corporations out of their schools and hospitals?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely crystal clear. In the WTO, under the GATS, our universal health care and public education are not subject to any international trade rules unless Canada accepts those rules. We did not accept them in the Uruguay round and we will not accept them in the next round.

Oral Questions

I do not think it is up to Canada to decide for other countries what they should be doing as the NDP is telling us what we should be doing right now. If other countries want something for themselves they can volunteer for it. We will not.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that if Canadian corporations are going to profit in health care and education in other countries, we are going to have to sacrifice our public health care and education system in Canada.

Last month the heritage minister said “What we are seeking in the Seattle round is an explicit reference in the WTO that culture is not to be negotiated at the WTO—period”, not a separate instrument but a carve out in the WTO.

Is this the position that the trade minister will be taking in Seattle?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the position I will be taking is the 50 years experience we have and the recent experience we have on GATS, which is absolutely clear. A country may make a concession to us in a certain field without us having to volunteer a concession in the same field. That is what international trade is all about. A country chooses the sectors in which it makes its concessions. Canada will not make concessions on health and public education.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the solicitor general.

When did he inform the Prime Minister’s office or the Prime Minister of the disappearance of the documents?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not inform them at all.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, I asked whether he informed the Prime Minister. The solicitor general said he did not. How is it then that the Prime Minister commented that the matter was not all that serious?

There is a real problem here. I am giving the solicitor general a chance to rethink his answer. Did he inform the Office of the Prime Minister, yes or no? If he did not, on what did the Prime Minister base his remarks?

I hope they will get their act together, because there is going to be a need for a new solicitor general very soon.

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I will respond for the Prime Minister. I did respond to your first question previously.

The Speaker: I remind hon. members to please address the Chair.

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GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources.

The fifth conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on climate change was held recently in Bonn, Germany. Would the Minister of Natural Resources outline what steps are being taken within Canada to reduce domestic emissions of greenhouse gases pursuant to Canada’s international commitment under the Kyoto protocol.

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the long term we are working with 16 different issue tables involving 450 Canadian experts in a very open, inclusive and transparent way with the provinces and other levels of government to develop the long term strategy.

In the meantime, we have the climate change action fund. I am pleased to confirm that the Minister of the Environment and I announced this morning an incremental amount of funding of \$9.6 million from the climate change action fund supporting 59 different projects across the country in public education, science impacts and adaptation, and in technology measures to make sure that Canada performs well in respect of its climate change commitments.

* * *

● (1450)

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, according to my sources, there are currently 753 offenders unlawfully at large in Canada. That is about 5% of the prison population.

Would the solicitor general please explain why there are almost 1,000 serious offenders on the lam in the country?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that when Correctional Service Canada has an offender escape from an institution it contacts the RCMP, co-operates with the RCMP and tries to apprehend the individual as fast as possible.

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, the daily *Le Devoir* reported that Ottawa had developed and implemented a far-reaching plan of action in preparation for the last referendum in Quebec.

To that end, the number of people who were granted Canadian citizenship increased from 24,000 in 1993 to 44,000 in 1995, the year the referendum was held. Since then, their numbers have been dropping consistently.

How can the minister claim that the increase was not due to the referendum when the numbers show just the opposite?

[English]

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member and all members in the House that voting is a fundamental right of our democracy. Before any vote, in any province across the country, we do everything we can to make sure that those who are eligible to vote have that opportunity and are not denied the right.

I further point out to the member that many of those people who he referred to—and I am concerned that he would deprive them to vote—were actually selected by the Quebec government as immigrants to the province of Quebec.

* * *

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Canadians have clearly indicated that they want to know what they are eating. They want the government to fulfill its statutory obligation to require labelling of genetically engineered foods. By predetermining that labelling will be voluntary, the government has pre-empted public input on this issue and has dismissed Canadians' legitimate concerns about food safety and about consumer choice.

Will the government reverse its decision on this matter, do what Canadians want and agree today to immediately implement a process for mandatory labelling of genetically engineered foods?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has clearly said and will continue to say that before there can be any kind of labelling, it naturally has to be meaningful, credible and enforceable.

I remind the hon. member that the government has put in place a process with the Canadian Standards Council. It will be beginning

Oral Questions

its meetings with over 80 organizations and interested groups in the country to talk about the labelling of food and how we could do it in an enforceable, credible and meaningful way.

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SOLICITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, it appears the solicitor general's department is now on autopilot. This incident has been described by many as the most serious breach of national security in years.

Canadians have suffered through a solicitor general that talked too much. Now we have a solicitor general who does not talk to the PMO or the heads of his own department. Who is minding the shop in this ministry?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that when the director of CSIS informed me of the situation, he informed me that the inspector general of CSIS was conducting an investigation and CSIS was conducting an investigation. I was well aware that SIRC would conduct a review because it has had the mandate from the House for the last 15 years to conduct such reviews. That is exactly what is happening.

* * *

ORGAN DONATIONS

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada ranks very low among nations in organ donations.

What is the Minister of Health doing to increase organ donations and give hope to Canadians needing life-saving transplants?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rates of organ donation in the country are not high enough. A year ago, I asked the Standing Committee on Health to look into it and make recommendations. It has done so and we have accepted every one of them.

● (1455)

It is through efforts like those of the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale and also the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam who has now tabled a private members' bill, the principles of which I agree with, that we are making progress.

The provinces and the Government of Canada have now agreed upon a strategy. It is going to work. The Kidney Foundation of Canada has praised it and said that it has its full support, that it will significantly improve the situation and that it will save lives.

*Oral Questions***CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA**

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, of the 1,000 convicts that are on the lam in this land, 15 lifers, 19 convicted of manslaughter and 14 serious sex offenders are currently at large.

My question is for the solicitor general, and he should listen carefully. Will he personally accept responsibility when a law-abiding citizen in this land is harmed by one of these people?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, escapes from federal institutions are taken very seriously. I am pleased to report that the rate of escapes from minimum security institutions has been cut in half since 1993 and 1994.

* * *

[Translation]

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the large scale production of genetically modified organisms might result in the cross-pollination of surrounding fields, thus contaminating organic farming crops. This means that organic farmers could lose their certification.

What does the minister intend to do to meet the concerns of organic farmers who could lose their certification?

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the growers of registered seed and grain crops in the country have put in place a set of regulations that they abide by, putting in setbacks and standard distances between different varieties of crops.

The same types of rules and applications can and do apply. They are put in place by the industry on a voluntary basis. They are regulated by the industry itself. In such a way, the reduction of cross-pollination is assured.

* * *

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario and Quebec have made it abundantly clear that they do not want MOx plutonium shipped through their communities.

Ontario Power Generation made it clear that it does not intend to burn it. The Russians will require significant compensation for shipping MOx through Canada and the Americans are going to burn their own.

Why is the Canadian government pursuing a costly and potentially dangerous course of action?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of the evidence and information indicates that this is not a dangerous procedure. In fact, even the Greenpeace organization has conceded publicly that this is a safe procedure.

The transportation routes and the emergency response plans have all been reviewed by the Department of Transport under all of the provisions of the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act.

Canadians can be absolutely assured that every applicable Canadian law, rule and regulation to protect public health, safety and the environment will be fully and rigorously enforced, and this matter can be undertaken safely.

* * *

CSIS

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth serious breach of security within CSIS in as many years. In one of these cases, it actually led to the death of an agent. This is serious stuff. I want to be assured by the minister that he has a handle on what is happening.

I will remind the minister that CSIS has yet to find the missing documents. As far as we are concerned, it is still on a search, presumably in the Toronto dump, to find them.

Can we rest assured that the type of inactivity—

The Speaker: The hon. solicitor general.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, the director has assured me that all necessary steps have been taken. He assured me three weeks ago and again today that all necessary steps to ensure security are in place. Measures will be taken and have been taken.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Jake E. Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, Ind. Ref.): Mr. Speaker, farmers are suffering the worst cash crunch of the century.

● (1500)

Century farms are going bankrupt. Stress is causing family break-ups. Could the agriculture minister explain why the necessary help is withheld from these farmers under the guise of tough love when they are the most efficient and productive farmers in the world?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that in the last 12 months the federal government has put forward nearly \$1.1

billion as well as made a number of changes to existing safety net programs.

We are working very hard with the provinces. We are encouraging the provinces to participate fully with their 40%. We are working with the safety net advisory committee and we are making as much contribution. We will continue to look for continuing and further ways to assist those in rural Canada and to assist the agricultural industry.

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GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the finance minister a question about the GST. In the 1993 campaign the Liberal Party promised to scrap and abolish the GST. In May 1996 the Minister of Finance apologized for not being able to keep the promise because of the difficult financial situation the country was in.

Now that the Minister of Finance and the country are awash in cash, now that he is rolling in the dough, will he keep his promise to scrap the GST? At the very least, will he use the surplus to reduce the GST?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that is not what was said. In any event, a House of Commons committee went across the country for two years. It met with consumers. It met with small business. At the end of it all, the recommendation was that in fact we continue with the situation as is because it would cause much less disruption.

That is not the hon. member's real point. His real point is that we should now begin to spend money, money, which we may not have in five years, and that we should return to a deficit. That this government will never do.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during oral question period, the Minister for International Trade made defamatory and slanderous comments that are unworthy of a person like him. I was surprised to hear him tell me and my colleagues that we do not like immigrants.

While he insists that there was a question mark at the end of his sentence, such a comment is unworthy of him. He should not make jokes about such a statement. The minister is usually more serious than that.

Privilege

• (1505)

This is a serious accusation. The minister's remarks had nothing to do with the question.

Also, on a personal note, there are immigrants in my immediate family and they are true Quebecers.

The minister is now pretending to play the violin. He is prepared to make all sorts of gratuitous accusations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. This is definitely not a question of privilege, but the minister is here and, if he wishes to reply, I will give him a few seconds to do so.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the question by the Bloc Quebecois on immigrants' right to vote, I asked "You do not like immigrants?"—with a question mark—meaning that in this country landed immigrants have the right to vote.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew: I asked him whether he did not like immigrants because one could wonder. A landed immigrant in this country is entitled to vote. However, if my question upsets him to this extent, I would suggest that together we consider this matter as a society.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. This is certainly not a question of privilege, as I said, and I hope that in such debates the members will choose their words very carefully. So, this part is over.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is this another point of order? Because this was not a question of privilege

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If I understand correctly, we just have to do as the minister does: hurl any old insult and then hide. If this is the case, we will do the same—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

An hon. member: With question marks.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. This point is over.

[English]

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In an effort of co-operation I would like to ask for unanimous consent to propose the following:

Government Orders

That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice the House return for the remainder of the present sitting to the consideration of the supply proceedings in the name of the hon. member for Brandon—Souris proposed earlier this day.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have permission to put the motion before the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MUNICIPAL GRANTS ACT

The House resumed from November 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to resume debate and to complete my remaining time of about 17 minutes.

The Municipal Grants Act is only necessary because the federal government feels that it needs special treatment in the payment of its taxes to the municipalities.

Previous to adjournment for the Remembrance Day break I had indicated to the House that municipal governments were the backbone of the Canadian economy and that their source of revenue was derived from taxation at the local level. Current high cost items such as the construction of water treatment plants and the upgrading and rebuilding of sewage infrastructure have created a lot of pressure on the revenue side for municipalities.

• (1510)

There are over 4,000 municipal governments in Canada, from the largest city to the most remote rural and northern community. Municipal governments in Canada have a pervasive influence on the economy, culture and quality of life. Municipal governments are major players in the Canadian economy, influencing technology and innovation diffusion and productivity.

Statistics Canada defines productivity as the technical efficiency of production. Municipal governments through investment in public services like transportation have a vital impact on productivity. In other words it costs money to provide services, and federal

governments that have infrastructure in municipal jurisdictions certainly should be expected to pay for those services.

In 1996 municipal governments spent \$39.2 billion providing community services and employed over 400,000 Canadians. Municipal government expenditures constitute about 5% of Canada's gross domestic product. In addition to the sizeable share of public sector spending on goods and services, municipal government capital spending totals about \$9 billion a year, equal to a third of all public advancement and about 6.5% of all capital investment in Canada.

Municipal government asset portfolios include roads, water supply and distribution systems, sewage treatment facilities, street lighting, some public housing, recreation facilities, parks, community centres, and a wide variety of vehicles, buildings, machinery and equipment. Members can see that the needs and the services provided by the municipal governments are much like those of the federal government.

The question is how the municipalities pay for them. As I indicated earlier, it is by collecting taxes, specifically collecting property taxes. Federal buildings require as I indicated the same services as other property owners so, in essence, why should federal buildings not pay the full rate? Canadian municipalities do not have the luxury of either receiving the majority of their funds from the federal government or the option of collecting income tax.

I will read a short excerpt from a background paper prepared by the Parliament of Canada on local municipal government jurisdictions in Europe just to illustrate that there are other ways of dealing with the tax collection side.

In general there are at least two striking differences between the administration of local and regional municipalities in Europe and in Canada. First, almost all European states and local levels of government are formally recognized often constitutionally, and that is not the case in this country.

Second, the bulk of the financing for local governments is provided by the national level of government in most states primarily through grants and other transfers. By contrast the concept of property tax, the mainstay of Canadian municipal finances, is less significant and less well accepted. These two phenomena are common in both federal and unitary states in Europe although there are naturally a number of significant differences among them.

With respect to financing, the German case is particularly revealing. As political scientists Don Stevenson and Richard Gilbert have outlined in some detail, municipalities in the country of Germany receive a negotiated share of national taxes. This income represents more than 50% of the total revenues of most municipalities.

Certain major cities such as Frankfurt receive a lesser share, but only because of their ability to raise significant sums through their own means. However, as the case of Frankfurt demonstrates, this independent revenue capacity is due to its legal ability to levy business taxes, especially on banks. Property taxes on the other hand constitute only 5% of Frankfurt's revenue, unlike in this country where property taxes make up the majority of the funds raised.

• (1515)

The constitution of Germany, a federal state, is equally instructive. It specifically recognizes municipalities and their responsibilities for local affairs. In addition, it anticipates their input in decision making at the national level, which is missing in this country, largely through negotiation. Local governments are miniature legislatures with council members elected on the basis of party lists and forming government and opposition parties or coalitions of parties in each local council.

A similar situation exists in The Netherlands, a unitary state with 12 administrative regions or provinces, but it is a more radical case. Not only are municipalities recognized in the constitution, unlike Canada, but there is a ministry of urban affairs. Its 1986 municipal act actually gave municipalities more independence, lessened the supervision of provincial authorities, and deregulated the processes of municipal councils which operate along partisan lines as well.

With more than half of the entire population located in the adjoining urban areas of Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague, it is perhaps not surprising that some 90% of municipal revenues come from the central government, roughly two-thirds of which are in the form of conditional grants. Like Frankfurt, Rotterdam is an exception to this rule as it raises nearly half of its revenues through business taxes. Once again, property taxes are insignificant, as in Canada, accounting for only 2.5% of the city's total revenues. We can certainly take a lesson from some of these European countries.

Sweden is perhaps the most extreme example of municipal importance and autonomy in Europe. This is all the more significant as it too is a unitary state. Swedish local governments, in addition to the standard Canadian responsibilities of the municipal level, are in charge of education, regional planning and the administration of most health and social services. They receive only one-quarter of their funding from central government grants but unlike most other European examples, they are able to levy their own income tax. That is really different from this country. Roughly half of their total revenues come from this income tax with almost all of the remainder of their funding being provided by fees and charges, not by property tax as we see it in this country.

At the other end of the spectrum are two unusual European cases, those of France and Great Britain. The former is long known for its

Government Orders

massive centralization of government programs and a seemingly infinite number of government layers. It is currently in the midst of a considerable decentralization exercise. The outcome is still far from certain with various factions urging the elimination of layers known as departments and prefectures.

One apparently inevitable result of the reform exercise will be the continued existence of the local or commune level to which citizens are fiercely attached and which is viewed as the essential building block of French democracy. At the end of the day its decentralization may well come to resemble the situation already prevalent in most other European states. Certainly the direction of its reform is the same as it is elsewhere, if not the pace.

We can see that this country lags far behind in the reform of European governments. We can see how we differ in terms of taxation. That is why our position is basically that this federal government should not ask for special treatment when it comes to paying its fair share of taxes.

Another issue that has been illustrated is that European jurisdictions tend to recognize municipalities as legitimate entities, something that is totally missing in this country. There have been many occasions where the federal government has been asked by the municipalities for this recognition. The usual answer is that they are the creation of the provinces but I believe it goes further than that.

I remember clearly in 1996 at a Federation of Canadian Municipalities convention in Calgary, the Prime Minister acknowledged the importance of municipal governments as the first level of government, that which is closest to the people, yet at the same time our own Prime Minister will not recognize the municipalities in a legitimate fashion in this very House.

• (1520)

Since that time I have stood in the House on several occasions to ask the Prime Minister to acknowledge the legitimacy of the first level of government in Canada. Unfortunately we are still waiting. That has not happened.

Prior to the November recess I indicated that it was unfortunate the government had not informed Canadian municipalities about the tabling of Bill C-10 for debate at second reading. My understanding is that it has taken many years of negotiation with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the federal government to make these amendments. I am informed that the FCM was very disappointed not to have been informed that the bill had been tabled for debate at second reading.

Our position is that all laws pertaining to both the individual and private sector should apply equally to the Government of Canada, its personnel, its agencies and parliament. We believe in the principle of equality and fair treatment.

Government Orders

Bill C-10 is not supportable. It gives the Liberal government too much discretionary power. The remuneration of the dispute advisory panel is non-binding. It merely maintains the status quo and entrenches into legislation common practices that were put into place 16 years ago.

When we see what is happening in other countries, we need major changes in Canada. We need to repeal the Municipal Grants Act. It is really unnecessary. Repealing the Municipal Grants Act will certainly force the federal government to pay all of its taxes responsibly like all Canadian citizens. We need to recognize the legitimacy of the municipalities and invite them to the table on issues that affect them.

It is time we took a new approach to governance for the people of our country. As we head toward the new millennium we need to find new ways for all three levels of government to work together in a co-operative manner. Co-operative federalism means having all three levels of government at the table at the same time and treating each other with respect.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order to ask the Chair to seek unanimous consent that we return to the supply day motion that was originally before the House. There was an attempt made by the government House leader to do so at the close of question period.

I would ask that the Chair consider putting that motion again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Does the hon. member have the permission of the House to put the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's comments knowing that his background in municipal government is similar to mine. I was involved in municipal government for 18 years on council in the town I live in of Picture Butte.

The recognition of municipal government and the importance it has in the running of the country has not been recognized fully by the federal government. It is certainly not recognized fully in this legislation.

The payment in lieu of tax system that was put in place leaves a lot of authority and discretion to the minister. That sometimes places municipalities in a very untenable position when it comes to budgeting and working out taxes for their own people.

• (1525)

What more importance does he see municipal governments being given by the federal government? Municipal governments

are a creation of the provinces, but in order to bring them into the equation and the discussion, the federal government has to recognize the importance of municipal governments at some time. I would like my colleague to comment further on that aspect of his delivery.

Mr. Inky Mark: Madam Speaker, as we head into the new millennium, as a country we need to find ways to work together rather than to work apart. We have seen over the last decade, if not longer, that there tends to be a greater division between all three levels of government. Unfortunately, the municipal level of government tends to be neglected even more today than it was before.

I would like to redefine what the federal government has always called co-operative federalism. We need to exercise and put into practice the real definition of what co-operative federalism means. It means co-operation. There cannot be co-operative federalism unless all the stakeholders are at the table. There cannot be co-operative federalism if it is a top down approach, that the guy with all the money makes all the decisions. That seems to be the problem we encounter almost daily.

There has to be a new vision and a new way of doing business. We cannot do business unless everyone is involved.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Madam Speaker, for the past six years I have made it a practice to visit as many of the municipal councils within my riding as possible. After six years I have discovered that the most fiscally responsible and accountable politicians elected in this country are at that level. Most of those municipalities run their governments in the black and if they do have debts they are very manageable debts. They have assets to deal with the debts.

In some parts of the country such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver we have what amounts to city states. They have vast responsibilities with huge populations.

In addition, the resources that the provincial and federal governments obtain come from these municipalities. They tax the wealth that is created in these municipalities. They take huge sums, billions of dollars, out of the municipalities and then design programs to which those living within the municipalities have to adhere in order to get some of that money back.

When I visit the municipal councils, I always leave them with the question, would they support a constitutional amendment that would recognize municipal governments? I ask my hon. colleague that question.

Mr. Inky Mark: Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that those who work hard for the people closest to them and who are

responsible and accountable and then are not recognized beyond the level that they work, whether it is provincial or federal government, they certainly would welcome being legitimate. Up to this time they are in a way an illegitimate entity or body. They really do not have legitimacy outside of the provincial boundaries as established by the provincial legislation.

It is ironic that the governments that are the closest and the most accountable are the ones which are the furthest removed from the public purse. As many of us know from our experience here and also from past municipal experience, the irony is that the legislation in this House sometimes creates a lot of hardship for the municipal organizations, certainly when it comes to the environment.

• (1530)

They just do not have the resources to put in place all the recommendations that need to be put in place. At the same time they are shipping all the dollars to both federal and provincial governments. They need funds to look after their own budget. Basically they go to the two upper levels of government begging for dollars.

Unfortunately they are not at the table and they really need to be at the table. It would make a huge difference in the governance of the country just to have municipal governments at the negotiation table, or even a simpler beginning would be to keep them informed of everything that happens in the House.

I have found travelling throughout the country that a lot of the information we have here they just do not have. As I indicated in my speech, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities was surprised to find that the bill was being debated on the floor here. They were not aware that was happening.

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Madam Speaker, seeing as how my colleague is a former mayor of a municipal government, I would like to ask him a question. Are there programs that are presently administered by the provinces as well as by the federal government which could best and most effectively be administered by the government closest to the people, the municipal governments?

Are there programs being administered far from the people by either the provincial governments or the federal government that could be better and more cost effectively administered by the government closest to the people, the municipal government?

Mr. Inky Mark: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for Crowfoot for his question. If we reverse the whole system from a bottom up one rather than top down one, there is no doubt that we would have better government and more accountable government.

The biggest problem I have found as a fairly recent member of parliament is that Ottawa is too far removed from municipalities,

Government Orders

from small town Canada, unless they are around this region. Other than through the newspaper and television most Canadians do not really understand what is happening here.

The problem is that we have had top down government for too long. We need to reverse that trend. I point my finger at the provincial governments as well. Even though they sing a good song at times, they play the same game as the federal system. I have witnessed that as a former mayor at the municipal level. When it comes to doing the right thing, walking the talk, it is a different matter. They sing the song "Yes, guys are doing a good job and we need to support you", but when it comes to real bucks and real support it is a different matter.

They put in place regulations and rules that download. We have all heard the expression downloading to municipal governments. That happens federally and provincially. We need to reverse the trend. I reiterate that the municipalities need to be at the table to deal with matters that affect them and their purses directly.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to enter the debate on Bill C-10. This was an unexpected event for us this afternoon. We were earlier debating a Conservative Party supply day motion. Unfortunately that collapsed due to the fact that there were not enough members of that party in the House, so we are moving on with government Bill C-10.

Mr. Lynn Myers: You guys would not agree to having it extended.

Mr. Grant McNally: The government says they would not agree to having it extended. I do not know why they would not.

• (1535)

Bill C-10 is an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act. Its purpose is to provide for the fair and equitable administration of payments in lieu of taxes. It addresses the issues of compensation for untimely payments, defaults on tax obligations by certain tenants of the crown and by others in the legal system. It establishes an advisory panel to advise the minister on disputes concerning payment amounts. It also amends the title of the act to the payments in lieu of taxes act.

My colleague from Dauphin—Swan River was a municipal politician and mayor for a number of years as were other members of the House who got their political start at the civic level. There is at that level a degree of accountability that perhaps others emulate to a certain degree.

Those who seem to be closest to the people at the municipal level also seem to be the ones who are the most accountable in terms of fiscal responsibility and in terms of delivering services to their constituents and people in surrounding areas. There are those at the

Government Orders

local level who are calling on us, particularly the current Liberal government, to emulate our municipal counterparts in that regard.

I received a note yesterday from a constituent making that very point. When highlighting some of the wasteful spending going on by the government my constituent made reference to *Bubbles Galore*, a film produced not long ago and supported by some hard earned Canadian tax dollars. I share my constituent's concern in this regard.

He asked why the federal government engaged in these kinds of spending activities without giving it a second thought when his municipal government is accountable for expenditures of this type and knows that if it made these types of expenditures the constituents would be down at city hall knocking on council doors.

I ask that question of the government. Why is it that the government does not take the same accountable approach in terms of spending as do municipal governments?

The bill talks about several changes in the current act, one of them being interest payments made after agreed upon dates. It also talks about third party leases and property exclusions. The bill proposes to include some structures and improvements which used to be excluded from payment. However the bill does not drastically change the status quo.

We see that over and over again with the Liberal government. It seems to be willing to accept the status quo. The government wants to keep the status quo and use it as a model for approaching other topics and other situations, one of them being the Nisga'a treaty in British Columbia. Many people are concerned about the implications of that bill just as individuals are concerned about Bill C-10 and the application of municipal grants. The status quo is being presented in this bill.

The people of British Columbia are concerned that the Liberal government is promoting the same status quo in the Nisga'a treaty. It is making the same fundamental mistake, the same flaw, it made with the Indian Act, which it brought forward and has had in place for a number of years. It sets up inequalities and enshrines them in law, which is exactly what the Nisga'a treaty does in British Columbia as well.

Mr. Peter Adams: You are obsessed with aboriginal issues over there.

Mr. Grant McNally: The member for Peterborough seems to have awakened from his deep sleep on the other side. I am not sure if he will utter scurrilous remarks today as he has in the past. Perhaps he could listen to the people of British Columbia. They would like to have the opportunity to have a referendum on such an important issue as the Nisga'a treaty which will have great impact, not only throughout British Columbia but throughout the rest of the country. It will enshrine in law the treatment of people based on their racial background. That is clearly within the Nisga'a agree-

ment. It is promoting the same status quo that Bill C-10 promotes. Bill C-10 which has to do with municipal grants perpetuates the same status quo attitude in this particular area. It does not address the discretionary power of the minister and the crown in several different areas.

● (1540)

The recommendations of the dispute advisory panel are non-binding. Bill C-10 merely maintains the status quo and entrenches into legislation common practices that were put in place 16 years ago. It keeps that particular problem with the old legislation going forward into the new legislation. That seems to be the approach of the Liberal government. It has to examine things as they are.

Members of the government and cabinet can stand in this place and tell us one thing. They can say whatever they would like in this place. What is more important is to measure the actions that go along with those words.

When individuals say something we tend to take their word for it right off the bat because we are willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. However, when we see over and over again people saying one thing and doing another, over time the credibility of the message deteriorates. We see that time and time again with the Liberal government. It says one thing but it does another. We see that happening with this legislation. We see it, as I mentioned earlier, with the Nisga'a treaty.

We can draw a lot of parallels between a municipal government and a government at least saying that the Nisga'a treaty sets up a municipal form of government when in fact it does not. It sets up a different order of government that attributes powers and rights to the Nisga'a government which used to be within provincial and federal jurisdiction. We think that is wrong headed.

We think that whole process has been skewed. It has not received proper treatment from the government. We saw how it dealt with that bill in the House. It limited debate through time allocation and closure. We see it in question period. When opposition members rise to ask important questions about that particular piece of legislation the government is happy with the status quo attitude. It says everything is fine and that we should trust it, that it will take care of this legislation. It is the same with that piece of legislation and this one over here. What has happened is that the actions that back up those words are simply not there. The credo of the Liberal government is to keep everything going the way it is.

The Nisga'a treaty is not even supported by the leader of the official opposition in British Columbia who happens to be a Liberal, Gordon Campbell. He put out a news release and wrote a letter to the Prime Minister on the treatment of this legislation and said that the way it was handled was not appropriate.

Others have said that Bill C-10 is a piece of legislation that needs further scrutiny. My colleague from Dauphin—Swan River talked

about how the Federation of Canadian Municipalities was not aware that it was to be the topic of debate. However, here it is. We would think there would have been more consultation on it before bringing it to the House because it will have such a big impact on local governments.

Some of my colleagues at the local municipal government level will ask me when I am back in the riding if the federal government has any understanding of the fact that they are neighbours with other individuals and other municipalities. Does it want to establish another order of government? This is with specific reference to the Nisga'a treaty and how it sets up another form of government.

• (1545)

The mayors of some of my communities have told me that they have to, by law, consult with one another when there is an impact along one of their borders with another community so that what is done in one community does not negatively affect another municipality. They may also work out an arrangement for the sharing of services, whether it is snow removal or whatever the particulars are of the local area.

A question that has been asked by some of the mayors in my community about the Nisga'a treaty is why this other form of government has been put in place with no structure in terms of consulting with the other local jurisdictions. They wonder how the sharing of services will work. They have concerns about when that template being used in the Nisga'a treaty will be applied to other jurisdictions, particularly around the lower mainland area of Vancouver and the surrounding areas where there is not a lot of land to be divvied up to different groups, that there will have to be some kind of an arrangement made. They are asking why it is that the government has not considered those factors in relation to the Nisga'a treaty.

We would say that perhaps it is a notion that again falls into that status quo, the status quo approach the government has to governing. Whether it is Bill C-10, the Municipal Grants Act, or any other piece of legislation in this place, the government seems to simply be on autopilot.

I would like to refer to some of the information that Gordon Campbell has directed toward the Nisga'a treaty. He is a member of the British Columbia legislature who got his start in municipal politics and who was the mayor of Vancouver. In referring to the motion the government made, he said:

The motion this morning... to invoke closure on the Nisga'a treaty debate is a reprehensible abuse of democratic processes.

That was the B.C. Liberal leader, Gordon Campbell, who said that. He said:

This is an egregious abuse of democratic process, and shows flagrant contempt for all British Columbians. It's an unacceptable slap in the face to our province, and to all Canadians who deserve a full and open debate on this landmark treaty.

Government Orders

On a matter of this critical importance to our country, to our province and to our constitution, every Member of Parliament deserves the right to speak. Every Canadian should demand the right of their MP to speak. To put this in context, we wouldn't for a moment dream of shutting off debate on a change to the constitution affecting Quebec, but that's exactly what the government's doing to B.C.

It was a Liberal leader who made that claim. He goes on to say:

In just a few short hours, debate on this treaty will be slammed shut forever, and there isn't a chance in the world that anywhere near a majority of opposition MPs will be able to speak to it in that time.

It was appalling when the NDP government shut down debate on this treaty, and denied British Columbians' elected representatives the chance to even ask questions on 11 of its 22 chapters. But the federal government's conduct defies description. Once this treaty is passed, it will be set in constitutional concrete forever and cannot be changed. We only had one chance left to speak to this treaty on behalf of British Columbians, and now the federal government is denying even that. The surest way to shatter public trust and confidence in the treaty process is to limit debate on what these treaties actually say and do. The federal government should be doing all it can to open up the treaty process. This is a dangerous step on the part of the federal government that will only further undermine public trust.

Those are the remarks of the leader of the opposition, the man who would seek to be premier of the province of British Columbia and who is a Liberal himself, and his opposition to the Nisga'a treaty. As I stated, he is a man who got his start in politics at the municipal level. Of course we are talking about Bill C-10 and municipal government and here is a man who has that notion of accountability, as many in this place do.

I know members of the Liberal Party who got their starts in civic politics. Some of them are here today. They did an admirable job at the municipal level. I think they are here because they have the purest of motives to make positive changes in this place. Yet the process is skewed against those who would want to make the positive kinds of changes they know are effective and work at the local level.

• (1550)

Under the Liberal government, there is a process in place that limits the role of members of parliament in terms of those who are on the backbenches. There is a limited role in committee and a limited role in other areas. They do provide an opportunity for some input and some debate on topics, but certainly not to the degree that most of them hoped they would have had as members of the government: to enact, direct and help their own government make the necessary changes within its own ranks to become more accountable and more democratic. I think some of them are truly disappointed. Those who have been here since 1997 are seeing that after two years that impact is not being made.

There are many members of the opposition who feel the same way. The accountability they sought, to work hard at the local level, is simply not a concept that seems to be getting through here to the Liberal government. Whether it is Bill C-10, the Nisga'a treaty or other legislation, the government has a status quo approach that

Government Orders

everything is okay. We are to trust it, throw it the keys to the car and it will drive it. We can see that the car is going off the road. It is going to crash unless there is a change of heart by the government but we do not think there will be. That is why we will continue, as members of the official opposition, to put forward other ideas and another vision for the country. We will work to take the place of the government because that is our ultimate goal.

We can work from the opposition benches to make positive changes to impact on the government, but it is now at the point where after six years of governing the country, it is starting to show some of that same arrogance the government before it showed after being in office for a long period of time. It is time for a change.

If a group does not back up its words with actions, its credibility suffers. That was alluded to in the letter I read of the leader of the Liberal Party in British Columbia. That is what people are seeing at the local level as well. If federal politicians are not going to do what they say they are going to do, how is it that we can trust them to govern the country?

The people of British Columbia and right across the country are getting to that point. It is unfortunate because cynicism works into the hands of the government. To those individuals who say, "What is the use? I cannot change the system. My voice cannot be heard", we encourage them to stay engaged and involved in the process. As they do get engaged in the process, change can be made. There are other groups out there that do get involved in the process.

We know that the Liberal government is disengaging itself from the process. It has decided what its approach is going to be. When government members go out to consult, we really believe it is simply an exercise in public relations, an opportunity to go out and give their message to other people.

I spoke with an individual over the last break who sat in on one of these Liberal western alienation task force teams. I like to call it the western alienation rescue team, or WART. They came to western Canada. This individual said that at the public meeting there was a committee of Liberal senators and members of parliament and that there were three people in the room. The panel of MPs and senators were quite surprised that this individual was able to find the meeting. It had not been publicly advertised. It was a meeting they had set up so they could say they had a meeting. This individual had to go to great lengths to find out when and where the meeting was going to be. That is the kind of consultation the government has put in place when it visits western Canada.

The Liberals wonder why they are so lacking in members in western Canada. It is because they have simply stopped listening. The Nisga'a treaty and Bill C-10 are perfect examples of that. We wonder what kind of consultation process has been undertaken with the municipalities on that.

We think it is time for the government to either wake up or get out of the way and let another group govern that is going to listen to people, be accountable and make the changes necessary to put the country on the right track.

• (1555)

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the pleasure the other week to speak on Bill C-10. I first want to say, as a former president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, that when the member opposite asks about saying one thing and doing another, Bill C-10 is an excellent example of doing something in consultation. In fact, when the original freeze on payments-in-lieu-of-taxes was brought in in December 1992 by the previous Conservative government there was no consultation.

Since 1993, this government has worked tirelessly with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities establishing, for example, the technical committee which reviewed the whole issue of making payments on time, making sure that they pay interest if they are late and making sure that if they want to appeal they go through the normal process.

Some of my colleagues on the other side, including my friend for Brandon—Souris, was on the national board of the FCM at that time. He, among others, spoke very loudly about what the Conservative government had done at the time in not putting private companies on a level playing field with public companies like the CBC given the fact that it was getting a 10% discount.

I would point out to the hon. member, when he talks about actions, that it was this government in 1993 that embraced the national infrastructure program. Unfortunately, none of the parties on the other side embraced it in 1993. It has created over 125,000 direct and indirect jobs. It has been announced again in the Speech from the Throne that by the December 2000, with the co-operation of municipal and provincial governments, we will have a new national infrastructure program.

We talk about the environment, the 20% club. This government initiated with municipal governments across Canada to reduce CO₂ emissions by 20% over 10 years.

We talk about urban crime and safety issues. In 1997, I had the pleasure to be on the team Canada mission with the Prime Minister to Asia. I had mayors, some from communities across the way, who were on that mission. It was the first time in the history of federal-provincial-municipal relations that we were able to have a meeting. As president, I had a meeting with the Prime Minister and the premiers in Manila in 1997 to talk about infrastructure. The Prime Minister listened to those issues and in the end the program was extended.

Government Orders

We talk about community energy programs where we are trying to reduce CO₂ emissions to improve the energy in the country. It is this government which embraced with the FCM that program.

We talk about actions. I would point out that in November 1996 I had the pleasure of addressing the first ever federal-provincial environment and natural resources ministers conference on these issues dealing with the environment.

When we talk about co-operation and talk about listening, the government needs no lessons from the Reform Party. The government needs no lessons when it comes to working in concert with municipal governments. Maybe we could eliminate the middlemen, which would be the provinces.

I should point out to the member that he is in error. Two weeks before this bill was introduced in the House, the FCM was given a full briefing on Bill C-10. It was introduced at first reading in the House on October 27. I believe that after second reading it goes to committee, and I know the FCM will be there. The FCM has supported all along the fact that we want to have ground rules that we can all agree to. We have that. This legislation has been drafted to deal with those issues.

Would my hon. colleague across the way like to comment on any of those things given the fact that when we talk about actions and co-operation I have tried to outline those very briefly for him?

I had a longer opportunity the other week to talk about some of the real issues that the federal and municipal governments have been able to deal with. My good friend from Dauphin—Swan River, who was a municipal mayor, was certainly involved in terms of dealing with issues and looking at the response of a national government when it dealt with these kinds of very important issues for the community, again remembering that there is only one taxpayer.

If the hon. member would like to make any comments on those observations, I would be delighted to hear them.

Mr. Grant McNally: Madam Speaker, I would certainly love to respond to some of the comments made by my colleague.

He first said that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities was given a full briefing. I do not dispute that fact. It was not aware that it was coming back for second reading in the House even just before the break week. There is also the idea of the infrastructure program, which he mentioned as being a good program. That was proposed by the municipalities, not by the Liberal federal government. Once again, that is what the government does. It takes somebody else's idea and passes it off as its own. That is what it did with the infrastructure program. That is exactly what it does. It is no different with this program.

• (1600)

He talked about the municipal infrastructure program. Guess what? The timing of those big signs that went up across the country just happened to coincide with the federal election. I am sure it was a coincidence—

An hon. member: No, they came after the election.

Mr. Grant McNally: Shortly after, as a thank you to those areas, and now we hear that there is another infrastructure program coming up. That is fine, but is it going to be coinciding with another federal election? I wonder.

The member talked about CO₂ emissions and energy. There are a lot of CO₂ emissions that need to be taken care of on that side of the House, right here in this place.

I wonder if the member could comment on the slash and burn approach to health care and education spending that this government has taken since 1993. That is what municipal councillors are talking to me about: When is the federal government going to restore the money it gutted from health care and education? The slash and burn Minister of Health likes to talk about the money reinvested in health care, and it is great that he has reinvested it, but he is hardly even at half of what he cut from health care and education spending.

I do not know how it is that this member and other members of the government can stand in their places and defend that kind of record.

He talked about trade missions with the Prime Minister. I am glad he had an opportunity to visit with the Prime Minister. Maybe the Prime Minister could take a trade mission out to British Columbia. Perhaps he could visit some of the communities that are talking about the Nisga'a treaty and maybe talk to individuals about concerns they have with that, or about the high rate of taxes he is imposing on people in British Columbia and across the country. Perhaps he could take a little fact finding mission on those areas of concern.

The member asked me to comment on those. He made wide ranging generalizations and I am going to respond to every one of them.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member gave his speech. We are now into questions and comments and there might be other members on this side who wish to make them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The period is called questions and comments.

Government Orders

Mr. Grant McNally: Madam Speaker, I was not quite finished with my answer, but I will wrap it up. If the member wants to ask me another question, I would be more than happy to respond to her question too.

As I was saying, this Liberal government has slashed and burned health care and education spending. It has done that. Those are the actions. The member for Oak Ridges talked about actions. Those are the actions his government is responsible for. People within the local ridings and communities are asking when the federal government is going to restore the funding. It has taken the approach of slashing and burning health care and education spending since 1993. When is it going to restore those dollars to the people who need them most, the people at the local level, within the municipalities and the provinces, rather than taking this hide and seek approach in Ottawa?

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I did notice that the member for Dewdney—Alouette managed to try to get in another speech rather than simply responding to a question and comment from this side of the House. However, I want to pick up on his comments about this party stealing ideas.

I was a member of the board of directors of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities when the infrastructure program was developed, as was the current Minister of National Defence, the man who was the first minister for infrastructure in this government. As such, I would like to tell the member that this government brings good ideas to government. It does not steal them from anywhere. There are a number of us who contributed, and contributed very strongly, to making sure the infrastructure program we supported as municipal politicians was implemented by the government we chose to become part of.

As a member of parliament for the national capital region I would like to tell him that I am one of many who worked with our minister to bring forward very progressive legislation on municipal grants. We understand fully well the importance of this grant system, grants in lieu of taxes, to our municipalities. This is not a flash in the pan. This is not a stolen idea. It is an idea that many members on this side of the House worked very hard on with our ministers and with our Prime Minister. The member should be saying thanks instead of being critical.

• (1605)

Mr. Grant McNally: Madam Speaker, I thought the deputy whip herself was going to engage in giving a speech rather than asking a question. I was hunting and searching and looking for an actual question in those comments. I think what the hon. member wanted me to do was thank her. I say no thanks to everything that the Liberal government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I stand to speak to Bill C-10, an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act.

I would like to put on the record the purpose of this act, which is to provide for the fair and equitable administration of payments in lieu of taxes. It addresses the issues of compensation for untimely payment, defaults on tax obligations by certain tenants of the crown and the bijural nature of the Canadian legal system. Additionally, it establishes an advisory panel to advise the minister on disputes concerning payment amounts. It also amends the title of the act to the payments in lieu of taxes act. That is the purpose of the act. That is the purpose of the debate.

We tend to differ in the description, but that is the description provided to us by the government.

Let us take a look at the relationship of the municipal government to the provincial government and then to the federal government. About 15 years ago, long before I ever thought I would be crazy enough to get involved in politics, I vividly recall sitting in front of my television set watching Allan MacEachen, the then Liberal finance minister, waxing eloquently from his place in the House. He was going on about the fact that the Liberal government of the day, of which the Liberal government today is simply a carbon copy, was going to balance its books. In a typical Liberal sleight of hand, what it was basically doing was offloading expenses from itself to the provinces.

Living in the province of British Columbia at that particular time, as I recall, things were at a rather tight juncture. It was in the early eighties. We had been slapped with the grossly ill-conceived concept of the national energy plan of the Liberals, the centrist plan that pulled about \$80 billion permanently out of western Canada into central Canada. I recall thinking to myself at the time that the downloading to the provinces which Mr. MacEachen was talking about and the fact that the province of British Columbia was in no position to actually do anything about it, undoubtedly would end up appearing on my taxes, and would undoubtedly come out of my pocket, one way or the other, particularly as a homeowner.

It did not take long. The reality was that although the federal tax take out of my wallet and the wallets of my neighbours was not diminished, and the tax take out of my wallet and the wallets of my neighbours by the province was not diminished, the government ended up downloading it to the regional district in which I lived, which was the equivalent of a municipality. By downloading it what basically happened was that my property taxes went up by \$200 that year.

Government Orders

A Liberal finance minister stood here about 15 years ago and waxed eloquently about how he was going to get federal taxes under control and how he was coming closer to balancing the books, but of course the government never did. It just kept on adding and adding to what is now the massive national debt. The government talked about how it was going to get things under control, but I knew, because it was being announced by a Liberal, that there was going to be more money coming out of my pocket.

• (1610)

I would take the Liberal member for Oak Ridges at his word if the municipalities were looking at this, were involved in it and had some input into it, but unfortunately they are faced with the reality that they are at the bottom of the food chain as far as being able to look after themselves and being able to take care of their own fiscal requirements.

I should add that one of the great things about municipal finances is that on a year to year basis municipalities may not go into a debt or deficit situation. The government could certainly take lessons from that. It is something for which the municipal politicians deserve great credit. The fact is, they have to come up constantly with the delivery of services for people at the municipal and regional district levels. The municipalities manage to deliver services, be they to people, be they for reasons of property, or just the services of cleaning roads and streets, in spite of all the offloading of the Liberals in Ottawa. Let us be clear, it was the Liberals who downloaded all of the expense that has sifted down through to the provinces and on down through to the municipalities. Once again the taxpayer is being double whammied by the Liberals.

Why do I say that I understand what the member for Oak Ridges was saying, particularly with his involvement and the involvement of other members of this House in municipal governments? Why do I say that I understand where they are coming from in terms of the municipal governments being let in on some of the ideas that the federal government has, at the same time knowing that they have a gigantic club over their heads? They do the best they can. They make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, to use the old saying.

I should also add that I was rather interested in this prominent Liberal member's musings that perhaps the middleman should be eliminated, namely the provinces; that somehow the municipalities and regional districts would be better off if they were dealing directly with the federal government. Heaven help them. When we shake hands with these people we wonder if we will still have our wedding rings.

Municipal governments are creatures of provincial governments. They are not recognized under Canada's constitution. They are completely under the direction, the control and the legislative authority of the provinces. The member suggested that we

eliminate the middleman. That is to say, maybe we should remove the direct control of the municipalities which are delivering the services closest to the people, closest to their homes. This is the garbage collection. This is the social services cheque. This is the street cleaning. This is making sure that the gutters are clean and the leaves are removed. These are the details of everybody's life. Should we take the current authority for that, the provincial government, which heaven only knows is far enough away in most situations, and give it to Ottawa? That would mean that the municipalities and regional districts would answer to, be responsible to and be under the legislative authority of the federal government. I do not think so.

The government talks frequently about the infrastructure program. Let us take a look at how this act, Bill C-10, an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act, relates to the income of the municipalities. Looking at the past infrastructure program—and I understand that there is a proposed program coming, just in time for the next election no doubt—wondering why the municipalities express being in favour of it is not rocket science. It is very simple and straightforward.

So far I have described the problems which municipalities face because of the offloading of expenses from the federal level to the provincial level and ultimately to the municipal level, the municipal level having to work on a deficit free budget year in and year out. The municipalities are faced with a cash crunch. There are so many hands in their pockets from the authorities higher up, there are so many strings attached to any money that is available to them, that they will take any money they can get for needed capital projects.

• (1615)

Why are they not carrying on with capital projects without an infrastructure program? Because this government has attacked their very tax base. They do not have a tax base from which they can get the funds to do the things on their own.

It makes me think of the government's attitude toward the family. The government will take \$6 billion from people earning under \$20,000 a year this year. It will take \$6 billion in taxes, give them peanuts back and say, "Here is a little grant and another little grant. Are we not wonderful people?" The government will continue to have its hands in the pockets of individual Canadians, businesses and municipalities. It will continue to act like a gigantic vacuum cleaner. It will bring all the cash here to the bureaucracy in Ottawa, then turn around and give a pittance back.

The municipalities in light of that look at an infrastructure program and say, "Now we are getting something a little bigger than the pittance we normally receive. Now we are supposedly getting two-thirds free money".

This is the way the infrastructure programs basically work. Let us say a municipality wanted an intersection upgrade. That is very

Government Orders

easy. For different traffic islands, curbing, traffic lights and signals, it is easy to invest \$1 million in infrastructure like that. Let us simplify it and say it will cost \$900,000. The municipality has to raise \$300,000. The province has to match that with another \$300,000. The federal government can match it with another \$300,000.

It is interesting that for just under \$1 million for an infrastructure program, the federal government only invests \$300,000 and gets all the credit for it. It is an absolutely wonderful, masterful way of moving around a pea under shells. The government manages to baffle people who are not necessarily prepared to take the time to understand just how far the government has its hands in the pockets of individuals, businesses and municipalities.

As a creature of the provincial government, one of the difficulties municipalities have is when they do their budgeting. This varies from province to province, but as a blanket statement it seems to me that in doing their budgeting, the municipalities are never really sure of what the actual grants will be from the provincial government. In turn, one of the concerns I have about this or any other legislation, is rather than being tied into something concrete, hard and normal, Bill C-10, an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act, does not resolve the problem of where the money is going to come from.

According to Bill C-10, the minister is given the authority to pay interest on the payments in lieu of taxes if, in his opinion, that payment in whole or in part has been unreasonably delayed. That is just about as soft and mushy a bunch of words as I have ever seen in any act.

In the minister's opinion. Who is to say what the minister's opinion is going to be? Unreasonably delayed. Who is going to set the yardstick for what is reasonable or unreasonable?

On third party leases, the government leases some of its properties to non-departmental third parties. In the past, municipalities have experienced difficulty in collecting property taxes from these third parties with payment sometimes never being made.

To correct this situation, Bill C-10 proposes that if, as of the day following the last day of the taxation year, all or part of the taxes remain unpaid and if, and here we go again, "the minister is of the opinion"—that is the qualifier—"that the taxing authority has made all reasonable efforts to collect the tax and there is no likelihood that the authority will ever be able to collect it", then the property will be deemed to be a federal property and the federal government will pay the payment in lieu of taxes.

• (1620)

Again, as with all the legislation, without exception, that is ever brought forward by this government, there is all of this continuing

latitude for the minister, "in the opinion of", "if it is unreasonably delayed" and things that are simply not clear and not made definite.

It is absolutely paramount that the municipal authorities are able to do their budgeting. They already have a serious problem. In various provincial jurisdictions the province may be treating them fairly and in a timely manner, and in other provincial jurisdictions they may not. It can vary in treatment from place to place even within a given province.

Bill C-10, an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act, continues with all this latitude for the minister, "in the opinion of" and "if it is unreasonably delayed".

Why are the municipalities having difficulty in providing the level of service that people want, expect and deserve? This will vary from municipality to municipality. While it is mandated under their current spending that they may not go into deficit, they may nonetheless become involved in capital spending through borrowing. Some municipalities have gone into debt quite seriously. They go ahead with heavy municipal borrowing so they can go ahead with infrastructure programs.

That is the reason many municipalities respond very positively to the infrastructure program. It simply gives them back money that has already been extracted from them, from their constituency and from their province, but they nonetheless respond positively to it. Other municipalities will have decided that they are going to use a pay as you go basis with respect to the majority of their capital expenditures.

In the municipality of Cranbrook, where my constituency office is, there is a very serious challenge in terms of the streets. The city proper of about 15,000 is actually built on an old glacial gravel bed. Down under the topsoil, which is only a couple of inches, there is a deep gravel bed. This has created a serious problem for the main streets and side streets. As the city has grown, and as the amount of truck traffic in particular has increased on the feeder streets, the side streets simply have not stood up. As a consequence there is a constant battle of the budget.

I do not own property in Cranbrook. Therefore I am not offering an opinion, but an observation. The challenge is to say that a street is in such a state of disrepair that it requires temporary remedial action or that a very large volume of money is going to be spent to go down as far as 8 feet or 10 feet into the gravel so that the street can be built back up again and it will be permanently changed.

These are the kinds of challenges that municipalities are faced with on a month to month basis, particularly in Canada. With the exception of the lower mainland of British Columbia, we have a very harsh climate that drives the frost well down into the ground and into the services that are underneath the roads.

The point I am trying to drive at is that municipalities need more than anything the assurance of funding, where the money is going to come from. The province of British Columbia because of the NDP government of the last term and a half has a terrible situation. The government is having to extract more and more from the municipalities which is putting them at a real disadvantage.

● (1625)

In conclusion, my concern about Bill C-10 is simply this. What we need in our province, and I believe for that matter in all provinces for all municipalities, is more surety of funding. Unfortunately in my judgment, Bill C-10, an act to amend the Municipal Grants Act, does not provide that surety.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am becoming concerned about members of the Reform Party and their ability to develop myths. I choose that word so that I can be parliamentary. The bigger the myth the better.

For example, they are paranoid about first nations people and they build the myth that one of the more disadvantaged minorities in Canada is somehow taking over the country.

Another big myth which they develop has to do with crime. They are obsessed with crime, with petty crime. They deliberately build up a fearmongering approach, ignoring the fact that statistics show that crime has been decreasing in Canada. They build a myth instead of presenting the real facts.

In this debate we have heard members of the Reform Party build another myth. It is the myth of top down big government. Among other things, that myth demeans the other levels of government including the municipalities.

There was a time when the members opposite could have been members of parliament here, they could have been MLAs and they could have been local councillors all at the same time. That was the way it was in Canada. At that time power was held by a clique. That clique of people, almost all of them men, held all of those positions.

Since that time what has happened is that we have not developed a top down government. That is what it was in those days. A small group of people held every level of government in their hands. Since then we have developed a truly strong, decentralized democracy, arguably the most effective decentralized democracy in the world.

Instead of there being a pyramid with the federal government at the top and the municipalities at the bottom, the reality is that we have three levels of government which are something like three Olympic rings. Each of them is fully democratic, fully elected,

Government Orders

with great powers of raising taxes, with great powers of spending taxes and making decisions in their sphere of interest.

Those three areas of government overlap, just like the Olympic rings. I am not allowed to use props, but if I could, I could show how the overlapping works. They have large areas of their own responsibility and there is a small area in the middle where there is responsibility which is federal, provincial and municipal.

Those rings are in my mind. I do not know how those members work and they may work in a top down fashion, but in my riding I work out of my ring with the other three rings. We work very effectively. Where there is overlap, we work together to deal with the issues concerned. I would suggest that those rings are the main checks and balances in Canada. That is how our people are represented at various levels.

I believe that in the discussion the members of the Reform Party have been demeaning the municipalities and the goodwill and the judgment of people at the local level. If they are so cynical, so biased, so uninformed about the role of the particular ring which is the federal government, why do they not simply run at the municipal level?

Mr. Jim Abbott: Madam Speaker, I have heard some interventions in my day but that one certainly took the cake.

● (1630)

First, if he takes a look at the blues from my speech the member might find that I made absolutely no comment whatsoever about first nations. I have many things that I would like to say about first nations, not the least of which is that the government has an undemocratic approach to anything to do with first nations. However, that is a topic he raised that was not contained in my speech.

Second, I did not say anything whatsoever about crime, petty crime, and I categorically reject the concept he has proposed that we are fearmongering. It is this government that is turning around and is buying an aircraft for Correction Services Canada to be able to transport a growing number of violent criminals. It is this government that is doing it, not the opposition, but that is another topic I did not talk to.

I did talk about top down big government. There is the golden rule. The golden rule is very simple. He who has the gold rules. The government manages to attract such a sufficient amount of gold that it gets to rule. That is the reality.

The reality is that the parliamentary system has evolved over a period of time both under the Progressive Conservatives and under the Liberals. We now have what is the equivalent of a four year dictatorship where the Prime Minister is elected and then he chooses to turn his back on the responses he is receiving from the

Government Orders

people of Canada. He simply directs the people in his backbenches as to when they will stand up and when they will sit down, like a bunch of sheep. This is the reality in Canada.

In terms of the decentralized democracy again that is a myth. The decentralized democracy we are talking about here, the three levels of government the member was talking about and the overlap he was talking about are there in theory. The fact of the matter is that the major power of raising taxes is in the hands of the Prime Minister and the finance minister.

If that were not the case, why were the finance ministers of the provinces coalescing yesterday to try and come up with a joint program to bring to the finance minister? They did it in all good faith. They asked how they could bring this about, what is the common position and how they could co-operate because they have to gang up as best they can against the town bully, namely the Liberal Party which is in power in Ottawa at this particular time.

To suggest that I am demeaning municipalities is a gross misunderstanding and I suggest an intentional misunderstanding on the part of the member for Peterborough.

I was not demeaning municipalities. I was standing here in defence of municipalities, saying that municipalities require a break. Municipalities, if anything, require legislation that would put them on to a proper and equal footing with other levels of government. As I say, right at this moment they happen to be a creature of the provincial government.

In conclusion, what can I say? With that kind of an intervention I can only assume that the member was not listening or is choosing to interpret in his own way my comments, which is unfortunate because I am standing here in support of bringing strength to municipalities and their financing, and this bill will not do it.

Ms. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will keep my comments very simple. My colleague talked about broad Olympic circles. I will talk about prunes.

This is one of those bills where we think we are delivering strawberries to the municipalities. In fact they are getting predictability. They are getting fair payment. We are no longer calling them that glorious regal term, grants, but we are calling them payments.

There is predictability involved, but as usual the Reform Party happens to take the strawberries and turn them into prunes. They are very concerned that the minister at his discretion will pay arrears, at his discretion with pay for tenants who have it pegged, at his discretion will pay in a timely, fair fashion. As usual, the Reform Party has managed to turn an exciting consultative bill into a bowl of prunes.

• (1635)

Mr. Jim Abbott: Madam Speaker, prunes come from plums, not from strawberries, so I am having a little difficulty with the mixed metaphor.

It is rather instructive that the member has pointed out that now this payment will be called a payment and not a grant. Whoopee. The title of the thing has been changed. So what? Unemployment insurance is still unemployment insurance. Just because we call it employment insurance does not mean people are any more employed. The wordsmithing that we are into is typical of the kind of window dressing we expect from the Liberal government.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): 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 Dewdney—Alouette, APEC Inquiry.

[English]

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I have listened to this very interesting debate. It certainly touches on the grassroots of our country and the first level of government.

When we talk about governments we talk about their powers. Governments must have resources to function. We elect governments basically to protect our rights. The three fundamental human rights of the individual are the right to life, the right to own property, and the right to liberties and freedoms. We elect governments to protect those rights and not to deny us those rights or to take those rights from us.

Through the power of taxation, the whole principle of taxation is to take a certain amount of the wealth created by the people to provide services that individuals cannot provide for themselves and which a specific level of government can.

When we look at the powers of taxation at the three levels we find there is no limit on the power of governments to tax away the wealth created by the people. When we look at the municipal level we find the greatest husbanding of resources and the wisest use of those resources at any level of government.

As I pointed out to the House earlier in a question to my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River, for the past six years I have made it a practice to visit with my municipal councils as often as I can. I report to them, hear their feedback and offer any assistance I can so that they might understand the programs of government and what the priorities are at the federal level.

Government Orders

I have found that the most fiscally responsible and accountable politicians elected in our country today are at the municipal level. I asked at one council meeting: "How is it that you folks can resist the temptation to find the loopholes, to go into debt and build your empires as they have done at the two senior levels of government?" We see a huge debt at the federal level and in the case of most provinces they carry very significant debt. One councillor said that when they pass a spending resolution they have to meet their people on the street and in the coffee shop the very next day.

He was talking about accountability. Let us look at the lack of accountability at the federal and provincial levels. Those who are responsible for increasing the taxation are taking more wealth from the people who created it for the purpose of providing funding for a program that is supposed to benefit the people. When we look at their enormous and unlimited powers we realize they could simply tax away any amount of wealth from us as they want.

The greatest threat to the economic viability and stability of the family, of the business and of the individual is the unlimited power of governments to take away their wealth through the force of law, and that is what is happening.

• (1640)

We all support the whole concept of an educational system, a health care system and all other priority systems which provide those things that people cannot provide for themselves such as a transportation system, a highway system and so on. We are prepared to have our wealth taxed in order to provide for those programs.

However, when we see governments through the force of law taking that wealth from families and individuals to the point where they become impoverished, where they cannot make ends meet and their children are denied the necessities of life and have to live in poverty or without adequate housing, there is something wrong with the administration of power of those governments in taking the wealth away from the people.

Let us look at the track record of who has done that to the most exorbitant and extreme degree. If we want to look at extremism, we need go no further than to look at the manner in which our federal, provincial and municipal politicians have handled that power in terms of taking reasonable resources and rates of wealth from the people who create the wealth each year to fund programs the people want them to fund.

Governments have absolutely no right to tax money from people for programs which they think are in the best interest of the people without the judgment and the support of the people. They have no right to simply take money and give it to individuals to hang dead rabbits from trees. Although this is probably a rare example and fortunately does not happen too often, it does happen.

There is something wrong when we get to the point where the government is taxing 50 cents of every dollar or 50% of the wealth of anyone making over \$35,000 a year for the purpose of giving it back to people through programs. There is no question why the poverty rate is rising. That money is not being dispensed back to individuals according to the priorities of individual families, their children, the heads of the household and so forth.

Let us look at the three levels of government. If I had a choice as to who should be administering a government program I would pick the government with the best financial track record. That is the challenge.

When I look at Bill C-10 I ask myself if it alters my authority as a citizen of Canada to determine who is best at administering a social program or any other program and who can do it most cost effectively. I look for the track record.

We have a federal government with a \$585 billion debt and with the highest levels of taxation in the history of the country. We have provincial governments that have debts as well. What does that mean? It means that for years the politicians in charge, those who form the government, have overspent year after year after year. They have had to borrow on top of the high rates of taxation and on top of all the wealth they have taken from the people each year. They have overspent to the point where they have had to borrow again and again and again. Finally this level of government got to the point where it was getting so great that almost 35 cents of every dollar went to pay the interest on the debt.

• (1645)

This year, according to the figures that I see, almost \$42 billion was paid to service the interest on the federal debt; \$42 billion was taken from the people of this country, those who created the new wealth each year, in order to pay for the terrible mismanagement of our fiscal and monetary affairs over the past 30 years.

When we look at that, some of us ought to hang our heads in shame. Some of those who have gone before us in this House ought to hang their heads in shame that they have saddled our children and grandchildren with a debt so enormous that it may be a milestone around our neck when it comes to ever getting our taxes to a level where they ought to be, where not only can we afford priority programs such as health care, education, proper housing and so on, but where we could reduce taxes so that families do have the means to provide for their children and where we do not have one child in every five reported to be living in poverty.

When I look at the track record to see who has used the power of taxation in the most reasonable and moderate way, there is no question who comes out first. It is municipal governments. Yes, they have legislation which states that they cannot go into debt and

Government Orders

cannot deficit finance to the same extent that the provinces and the federal government can, but they can borrow money.

I asked a councillor how they had resisted the temptation to find the loopholes, to go into debt and to build their empires like the two senior levels of government have done. In municipalities with larger cities that type of accountability is lost. We do not meet people on the street the very next day after moving a spending resolution. We do not find that in the larger cities like Toronto, Montreal, Calgary or Edmonton. One of the reasons these cities are in debt is that the degree of accountability is not there as it is in the lower levels of government. What we have been seeking to introduce is a greater degree of accountability.

My colleague who spoke before me referred to the election of a majority government as a four or five year dictatorship with no accountability. That is what we have been facing. That is why we have outrageous government programs that are not supported by the people. Rather than praising the interests of the people, we have them holding their heads wondering why the governments are expending money in this way. There is no accountability.

The accountability contained in a federal election every four or five years or a provincial election every four or five years is insufficient to keep governments from going into debt, from raising taxes, from overspending and from spending money in a manner that will not carry the judgment of the majority.

I do not see anything in the bill other than the maintenance of a lack of accountability. In the minister's opinion, a payment can be made in whole or in part if it is his opinion to do so. If we have to rely on and have faith in the opinion of the minister what does that say about accountability? What if he decides against the will of the people? What if he chooses to say no to a municipality because in his opinion the payment is not due or it must be altered in terms of the amount or the size? What do we do? We cannot do anything.

• (1650)

I have found that the most important issue pressing on the minds of the people is that our three levels of governments, through the force of law, have taken away so much wealth on a yearly and daily basis that it is placing our families and individuals in economic jeopardy. We have cries from all parties when we see that happening. We see farmers going bankrupt, families who are destitute, children who are homeless and a lack of housing. Why? It is because they are not left sufficient resources to look after themselves, their children, their housing and the needs of their family.

What we see is the opposite. We see an unrestrained power to tax away the wealth of the people. If we do not stop it and roll it back then we will see the continuation of statistics reflecting child poverty. When we talk about child poverty, we cannot talk about it without talking about family poverty. Children are not isolated.

They have their moms and dads, and their homes, whatever they might be.

Why are we talking about child poverty? We should be talking about poverty, period, in the country. When children are in poverty their moms and dads are in poverty as well. We have to strengthen the economic stability of those families. I see nothing in the bill that will do that.

I am always energized after meeting with municipal councillors and municipal governments in my constituency because they are hard-working, conscientious people who are in touch with their people. They know their concerns. They know who they have to get to when it comes to snow clearing and what areas will be blocked when a snow storm arrives. They have hands-on information and they struggle with meagre means in order to provide some of the most essential services that their citizens need on a day to day basis.

When I look at the track record of our three levels of government, I am always enthused and given hope that if they can keep their spending under control at the municipal level and continue to do the good job they are doing, why can we not do it at the two senior levels of government. The answer to that is that we can do it.

We are spending about \$106 billion on programs at the federal level. If we could just maintain that level and use the money wisely, we could begin to leave more wealth in the municipalities. The thing that disturbs me the most is that the federal and provincial tax money comes from the municipalities. It comes from the people who live in the towns, cities and rural areas. They are the ones who create the wealth, the new wealth that is taxed each year. That is where I believe the most complex programs of government should be administered.

The most complex services required by an individual, a child, are those that are provided within the home. As one moves beyond the home, the first level of government should be the one that administers the most complex programs. However, what we see in the country today is that it is turned upside down. The most complex programs of government are administered at the provincial and federal levels by people hundreds if not thousands of miles away who really do not know those people and, in lots of cases because of that, really do not care.

• (1655)

If it was my choice to have a social program administered, I would vote to have it administered by those people who have the finest track record in terms of administration and financial accountability and that is our mayors and our councillors at the municipal level and our reeves and their councillors at the district level.

I do not see in the bill any relief from the concerns that I have seen in my riding in the level of government closest to the people.

Government Orders

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my colleague on his excellent speech. As usual, he has made some very interesting points. He and I have had many discussions on various issues. I always welcome his comments.

The previous speaker has been in the House longer than I have so I will ask him for his comments on this. One of the things I noticed after I was elected was that municipal councillors wanted to meet with me regardless of their political affiliation. One of the things that I have always respected about politics at the municipal level, at least where I come from, is that although there may be a political affiliation in terms of working for the greater good of the community, those tend to be put aside.

I have worked with Conservative members of the city council, Liberal members of the city council and New Democrat members of the city council. There are no Reform members on city council in my part of the world yet. I know Reformers may work on that. I have been impressed with the ability to put aside partisan politics in the interest of particular projects.

I think that perhaps we in the House might do well at times to emulate what municipal councillors are able to do. That was my experience with municipal councils. I do not know if that was echoed by the previous speaker, but I would be interested in hearing his thoughts on that.

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I often get asked that question when I visit my municipal councils. I might add that we have lots of Reformers in my riding on those municipal councils and they are hard-working, down to earth people.

Would it not be wonderful if the House could work like a municipal council where a problem could be identified and all parties brought to the table to determine the course of action and then allow a vote on that course of action and let the majority determine the course of action?

If we could set aside in many cases the political partisanship that occupies the House much too often at times and simply work for the best interest of the people of the country, I think we could reduce the cost and stop many of the games that occur in the House. I think we could begin to serve the people in a way that they would appreciate, which is not the way they are being served now in all too many areas where there is an identifiable need.

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his great speech, but I have another issue.

The federal government passes regulations and laws that affect municipalities without any regard for what they do to their bottom

line. It has recently come up with an idea for regulation to reduce the response time at airports. In particular, in the city of Prince Albert it is going to make a couple of minutes difference in the time the fire department can get to the airport. No one in Prince Albert, the council, the mayor, the people who run the airport and the people who use the airport, are concerned about it but the federal government makes this law.

Does the government have any plan in place to ensure that the city can afford the extra cost? No. It is to be passed on to consumers, the users, the airport shuts down, has limited use or something like that. Does the federal government give a hoot? It does not seem to as yet, despite the fact that we have made some interventions.

• (1700)

I would like to point out something else. When there is a disagreement in the private sector about property values, how is it handled? It is handled through a formal process with appeals. Once the appeals have been heard they are binding.

Is it that way with the federal government? Not at all. The federal government operates strictly on its own. It sets the rules. It sets the rules for appeals and all the rest of it. Even when it finally decides on something through the municipal grants review committee the minister is not obliged to accept the recommendations given, so the municipalities feel that the process does not work in their favour.

I would like to turn to the so-called Nisga'a final agreement and read from paragraph 7 on taxation and fiscal relations:

The Parties will negotiate and attempt to reach agreements in respect of grants, between them, in lieu of property taxes.

When we read all the way through the agreement we do not find that the federal government will simply enforce something on the Nisga'a people. However, we do not see an appeal process. We do not see anything. We see that it will sit down and attempt to reach an agreement. Who will determine when an agreement has been reached? It says in here that we will go through this every five years. Paragraph 3 reads:

Every five years, or at other intervals if the Parties agree, the Parties will negotiate and attempt to reach agreement on a fiscal financing agreement by which funding will be provided—

We presume that will also include transfers and payments in lieu of taxes. This agreement is very open ended. In the case of the bill before us it is not even open ended. It is closed. The federal governments sets the limits, and that is as far as it goes.

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, it is like my colleague said earlier, the golden rule is that he who has the gold sets the rules.

Government Orders

If the Nisga'a follow the agreement and the federal government says that it disagrees with regard to the cost or the moneys they feel should be expended in these areas, what then do the Nisga'a do? The government will have complied with the requirements of the agreement, but if all the power is left on the side of the government, for which the agreement allows, then what do the Nisga'a do?

When it comes to what the government is doing in the municipalities with the airports and fire services provided, again the government is deciding what is best for the people without any negotiation. It is imposing its will upon these people without consideration for the costs whatever.

I am also receiving concerns in this regard from my municipality. This is what is wrong with the federal level of government. When it sets rules or passes bills, it does not consult sufficiently with the people upon whom they will impact, both in terms of effect and who will pay for them. That is wrong and that is what is wrong with this level of government.

Ms. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on behalf of the big bad government. Sitting here listening, I feel so mean.

The member talks about the way the government consults on how it sets the tax levels. The policy initiatives in the bill say that we will develop the best practises for the valuation of special purpose federal properties. We will seek stakeholder advice regarding appointments to and management of the dispute advisory panel. We will commit to consulting assessment and taxation authorities wherever possible and whenever possible regarding the valuation of federal property.

We have consulted across the country. As a former municipal politician I feel thoroughly consulted with. I feel that the set up in the bill gives many recourses for expert advice on the setting of property tax. This is not a great mystery. Property tax is pretty fundamental from province to province.

I think the initiatives are there. I think we have addressed the hon. member's concerns. Again, I am very sorry the Reform Party seems to be sour on everything.

• (1705)

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, when you put a piece of fruit in your mouth and it is sour, it is sour. If we could all be reasonable people and negotiate on terms that are fair, it would be wonderful and it would work.

Who has the final say? It is not the municipalities. It is the federal government that has the final say. We can negotiate and negotiate and negotiate but who has the final say? It is not a level

playing field. It would be wonderful if the negotiations could occur with people who are fair minded. Often that is not the case.

Who makes the final decision? The person who has the final say. In this case it is the federal government. It has always been the federal government. If that were not the case, why is it imposing regulations upon our municipal airports without consultation and leaving them with the cost? That is exactly the same kind of scenario we see here.

The government is supposed to negotiate but what if it does not? What if it simply imposes as it is imposing fire regulations at airports? Municipalities are struggling with limited budgets. Because the federal and provincial governments are taking so much of the wealth out of the municipalities, there is very little left for them to tax and they have to pick up the cost. That is why it is not working and that is why—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I am sorry but the hon. member's time expired some time ago.

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am not too sure I can rise to the occasion as my good friend just did, but I too would like to raise some problems and to advise the government of some difficulties I see with the bill in some areas where I think it is somewhat negligent.

I am told that the purpose of this act is to provide for a fair and equitable administration of payments in lieu of taxes. That tells me that the government is under some obligation, whether through its own actions, in doing business or in providing for an authority with the ability to business such as an airport authority or a port corporation, to make payments in lieu of taxes or to provide to the municipality or to provincial government for expenses that may occur as a result of a particular business.

I would like to address the issue that has to do with the port authorities, in particular Vancouver port and Fraser port. Both those ports are great contributors not only to the local economy of the Delta area in which part of the Vancouver port is located or of the Surrey area where the Surrey-Fraser docks are. They also have some properties in the municipality of Richmond.

It is not only that they have an impact on those municipalities, but they certainly impact on the province and the transportation routes maintained by the provincial government. Their impact extends across the country. They allow Canadian transportation facilitators, whether the Canadian National Railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway or trucking companies within Canada, to move goods from Vancouver port across the continent right down to the east coast and elsewhere into the heartland of the continent.

That movement does not come without cost. Unfortunately much of the cost of that accrues not to the federal government but to the province because it is responsible for providing highway trans-

portation certainly to the municipalities adjacent to these ports. The cost there can be huge.

I will address the cost associated with providing a connecting route between Fraser port, whose main focus of operation is on the Fraser River in Surrey across from New Westminster and on Annasis Island, which is again in the same neighbourhood, and the port of Vancouver at Roberts Bank where a large container facility now exists.

• (1710)

That container facility was completed a little over two years ago when it came into operation. The result is that truck traffic to the Vancouver port has increased tremendously. It has gone from basically zero, as far as containers went, to where there are probably hundreds of truck movements a day in and out of the port.

There is also rail car activity, moving containers on to the port property and away from it. The result is a huge increase in traffic in the municipality of Delta. As well, the connection to CN rail yards at the port of Mann and the CP rail yards at the port of Coquitlam are originating points for some of the train and container traffic that moves into the port of Vancouver.

The burden in providing for the road link between these two port facilities falls directly on the municipality of Delta. The roads that are in place were roads that were not designed for that purpose. If we look at River Road in Delta, it is a local road. It was designed as a local road to provide access for the local community to move along the south shore of the Fraser River. It was not intended in any way as an interprovincial artery or an artery that would join two of the busiest ports in Canada. I believe Vancouver port is the busiest in Canada, or close to it. The Fraser port in its own right is a very busy port.

What we now have is day and night a continual line of heavy trucks moving through the area of North Delta where I live. They are moving these large containers from the Fraser port and other truck facilities throughout the lower mainland and across Canada, through North Delta to Vancouver port at Roberts Bank.

It may be difficult to imagine but I am talking about a road which is the normal width of a residential street. Day in and day out large trucks move along that street. The street is located at a height above the river. If we look at the topography of the land in North Delta, as we approach the Alex Fraser Bridge the road goes up from a point at almost sea level on the dike to about 150 feet above sea level. It is at the top of that hill that the road runs.

The problem is that the land is not exactly stable. If we talk to residents who live along that road they tell us that over the last little while since this container activity has begun at Roberts Bank they are seeing cracks in the foundations of their houses. All day long they can feel the pounding of the trucks going by. They can actually

Government Orders

feel that in their homes. The homes, Mr. Speaker, are no farther away from the truck traffic than you are away from me, which is about 100 feet. That is how close these large trucks are travelling to the homes in that residential area.

The question is who is responsible for upgrading this arterial route through a residential neighbourhood. Should it be the municipality? The cost will be horrendous for whoever does it. To upgrade the road would require the purchase of many of the homes that line it to provide for additional width to the road bed. In several areas the ground on which the road stands is not stable enough to allow for continued use without serious upgrading. There would be a huge cost to do that.

• (1715)

The underlying question is would it be ethical and morally correct to upgrade the arterial traffic through this neighbourhood or would we simply ignore the residents and tell them their neighbourhood is going to have a four lane highway through it, an artery which is primarily dedicated to truck traffic plus a bit of local traffic? Do we do that? The answer many have reached is no, the current route through a residential neighbourhood is not the one.

One of the alternatives that has been proposed is to go up through a gully which is a salmon bearing stream for coho salmon and whatnot and connect with the North Delta connector, the Nordel Way. That road is an arterial road. It is a busy road already without the addition of the truck traffic. Many would suggest it is not the chosen route either.

The chosen route by many would be to construct a new road along the river bank at the base of the hill. At times the road would be mounted on pilings in the river. It would be an elevated road in the river. The question then is who will pay for it. Should the municipality accept the burden of paying for the roadway, or should it be the province, or should it be the federal government?

It all boils down to whose facility the road is accommodating. It is not accommodating the interests of the local people. Their interests are already well taken care of by the existing road network. It services that residential area.

Should it be the province? Is the province the only beneficiary of Vancouver port and Fraser port? It is not. The country as a whole benefits from the existence of these two ports. Prairie grain is shipped through there. Coal from the interior of British Columbia and elsewhere is shipped through the port at Roberts Bank. Containers travel from across Canada and containers travel into the ports and then move across Canada. They are the goods that move through the municipality.

The benefit accrues not only to the local people. Our involvement is probably less than most. The involvement here is one that benefits everybody, the local people insofar as jobs are provided,

Government Orders

the province because of the taxes that accrue from the port, and the country as a whole because Vancouver port provides a gateway to the world for goods both exiting Canada or entering from afar. From coast to coast, we all benefit from Vancouver port. It would seem to me that if we all benefit then to a certain extent we all should pay.

The bill talks about payments in lieu of taxes. Somehow the government itself is the final arbitrator on the level of benefit that should accrue to a municipality. I think we are shortchanged. The local people are not being given the kind of access to federal money that they should have.

An outside arbiter or a neutral arbiter should look at the impact of these registered federal facilities. The arbiter should say what their impact is on local communities and what type of tax revenue should accrue to local municipalities and to provincial governments, given the impact the federal facilities have on the local people.

• (1720)

I do not see that happening. I think it is a weakness in the bill. I have written to the federal Minister of Transport on the issue of a connecting route between these two ports and a connecting route really between Vancouver port and the rest of North America. That traffic should not in any way shape or form be traversing a residential neighbourhood. It is dangerous and destructive to the community.

There is a danger in moving many of these goods. Certainly, local emergency officials have no idea what types of goods are being transported through that residential neighbourhood and accidents do happen. As that traffic increases, the chances of a serious accident are even more possible.

When I look at this bill, I would certainly like to see the government address the issue of giving municipal and provincial governments a better hearing, a hearing that would be more independent than the kind that has been proposed by the bill.

Too often we think of government services as benign or merely helpful to the local community. People may think of a post office in a downtown core. They may think of other government offices that do not really have an impact on the environment and may be a benefit in that they draw people to a commercial district. When I look at the bill, I think of government entities which have a huge impact on the environment and which affect the quality of life many of us enjoy. I do not see that being protected in the bill. That is a serious shortcoming.

There are a number of other issues in this bill that are worth mentioning. I will briefly mention three items which I think are worthy of note.

The first is that the minister and crown agencies maintain too much discretionary power. I addressed that issue. I underline that we certainly believe that is the case. A neutral arbitrator should be addressing these issues.

The second point is that recommendations of the dispute advisory panel are non-binding. It merely maintains the status quo and entrenches into legislation common practices that were put in place 16 years ago. The bill is not an improvement in this area. It merely confirms the status quo and does not do anything to address the problems I have mentioned.

The third item we are concerned about is that the Royal Canadian Mint, Canada Post Corporation and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation should be added to schedule IV in order that they may be eligible to make business occupancy payments in lieu of taxes. That is fairly self-explanatory. These corporations are currently excluded from coverage in schedule IV. We think they should be brought into the fold.

On those issues, we hope that the government would see fit to amend the bill to address these shortcomings. We think it is only reasonable. I know my constituents who are living along that artery or river road would appreciate it if the government would see fit to accept some responsibility for the increased traffic through a residential neighbourhood that has resulted as a consequence of the development, if I may say a very positive development, of the Vancouver Port Corporation.

• (1725)

Ms. Carolyn Parrish (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am not being facetious when I say I found the rather lengthy discussion of the road quite interesting. I come from an area where a huge facility previously owned by the federal government and now managed locally, the Pearson airport, causes the same concerns among the residents.

This is a taxation bill. The hon. member talked about environmental concerns and the impact on property values. I would very seriously like to hear what recommendations the hon. member would make strictly in the area of taxation to address his concern about that road.

Mr. John Cummins: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that question. I think the hon. member recognizes that we share a problem, one which many of us share.

I do not have an immediate solution. We have to look at when there are government facilities, facilities licensed by or registered with the federal government such as airports and ports, there has to be some recognition that they have a huge impact, and at times a negative impact, on our communities.

Great revenues accrue from these types of facilities and we all benefit from these types of facilities. Certainly I benefit from the airport in Toronto. I live in Vancouver but I travel through there. I use it and I am a beneficiary. But in saying that, we have to recognize that it does have an impact on local people. The quality of their lives is impacted.

In the situation I described the impact has just come into play, and has magnified in the last two years by the development of the new container service at Vancouver port's Roberts Bank facility. Neighbourhoods which had experienced a fair amount of through traffic but limited truck traffic are now subject to an ongoing barrage of trucks, convoys of trucks, day in and day out, basically 24 hours a day.

Somehow or another we have to come to grips with that because this port is one which benefits everybody. It not only benefits the people who live in Delta, but the benefit is enjoyed by all Canadians. It brings great wealth into the country. We have to recognize that the lives of many people have been impacted. We have to look at ways of extracting revenue from the port to try to compensate those people whose lives have been negatively impacted by the port. It is only fair and just. I do not see it as a great imposition on the port or the government to do that; I see it as an obligation.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): 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

[English]

ORGAN DONATION ACT

Mr. Lou Sekora (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.) moved that Bill C-227, an act to establish a National Organ Donor Registry and to co-ordinate and promote organ donation throughout Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, Bill C-227 seeks to create an act to establish a National Organ Donor Registry to promote organ donation throughout Canada. The objective of Bill C-227 is to provide the means to increase the amount of available organs in Canada for the purpose of transplantation through organ acquisition.

Private Members' Business

A national organ donor registry would allow people to register legal consent for organ donations and would subsequently lead to an increase in Canada's low rate of donations.

• (1730)

We must establish a system to support high levels of organ donation in Canada. We have the opportunity to store or provide a link between information on organ donors from participating provinces. Information will be maintained in an efficient form for the purposes of identifying intended or potential organ donors.

According to the report of the Standing Committee on Health released in April 1999, entitled "Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation: A Canadian Approach", Canada is currently facing a serious situation with respect to organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

The present organ donor rate is unacceptable. Organ donation must be made an issue of national importance.

A national registry would provide an efficient means to allow available organs to be matched with waiting recipients. This co-ordinated effort would ultimately reduce the current waiting time for a match. As it now stands, one-third of individuals who wait for an organ transplant die as they wait for a matching donor.

Lives will be saved with the establishment of an organized and efficient national organ donor registry. It will be possible to co-ordinate the supply and demand of available organs.

The widening gap between the organs available and the number of Canadians in need of them highlights the void that we will continue to have without a national organ donor registry. The problem is that there is no national system to ensure that usable organs are used and matched to those in need.

The annual number of patients waiting for an organ replacement grows faster than the number of transplants being performed each year. Potential organ donors are lost because we lack a clear, organized and simple system in Canada. Laws need to follow rather than lead the issues that require a legislative response.

A national organ donor registry would provide the means to prevent the deaths of a third of all people who wait for an organ transplant now. The very success of transplants clearly depends on every effort that is made to increase the number of available donors.

The public is becoming increasingly aware of the vast potential of organ transplantation. Public awareness is the key to tackling the issue of transplant shortages in this country. The first week of April is now designated as National Organ Donor Week. Public awareness of the importance of organ donation continues as April 18 to April 25 now marks National Organ Donor Awareness Week.

Private Members' Business

It would seem only logical to have people's organ compatibility levels easily accessible in a national database so that matches could be made in seconds once the organs become available. The price of a human life is worth the time needed to organize a national co-ordinating organ donor system, as opposed to the many lives that are now lost without it.

The success rate for transplantation is worth noting. After one year, both liver and kidney transplant recipients enjoy a very high rate of survival.

The most recent figures indicate that the current rate of organ donations in this country remains at a standstill of 14.8 organs available per million, as opposed to 21 organs per million in the United States. A national organ donor registry would help reverse the critical shortage of donated organs.

Canada has one of the lowest donor rates among western industrialized countries. Organ donations need to be on the public agenda simply because the situation is at a crisis level.

A national registry would enable provinces to share information about prospective donors. The ability to provide donor data when required by a hospital is crucial to the success of any registry.

The primary purpose for the establishment of an organ donor registry is for donor identification. Donor identification is effective only if there is a system for linking the potential donor to a potential recipient. There are three different types of donors. They include the following: intended donors, potential donors and actual donors.

• (1735)

An intended donor is an individual who has expressed the desire or intention to become a donor upon death, or when appropriate during life.

A potential donor is an individual who has been identified within the health care facility as being appropriate for the purpose of being an organ or tissue donor.

Lastly, an actual donor is an individual from whom at least one organ or tissue has been procured, allocated and transplanted.

Potential organ donors must satisfy brain death criteria before they can be deemed suitable for donation. Brain death is the irreversible ending of all brain functions, including that of the brain stem.

According to the Canadian Medical Association, the whole brain must be dead in order for the patient's organs to be harvested. After brain death has been declared there is no hope. It is time to let go and give hope to someone else. The pronouncement of brain death is never made by a physician who has anything to do with the

transplant process. Death is not prematurely announced in order for the patient to become an organ donor.

We need to find a workable plan to address the very real lack of available organs in the country. We need one central database, or linked databases, which will allow Canadians the opportunity to register their choice about organ donations in a legally enforceable manner. Lifesaving information should be available to those in the health care profession.

Securing organ donations is a community responsibility. Now is the time to rethink our approach to organ donation. Social awareness of the need to make a conscious and deliberate choice to donate one's organs at the time of death brings us to the point where we can acknowledge the importance of a national organ donor registry.

We need a national program that will co-ordinate well with participating provinces.

The British Columbia Transplant Society is a provincially funded health organization that supports the needs of transplant patients and families. The British Columbia Transplant Society directs, delivers or contracts for all organ transplants within the province and sets standards on quality.

In the spring of 1997, the British Columbia Transplant Society tested a new and significant program to help increase the effectiveness of organ donation in Canada. The program is called the organ donor registry. This provincial registry includes a computerized database that records the wishes of organ donors in B.C. Since the creation of the British Columbia Transplant Society the number of organ transplants performed annually has increased by more than 400%.

The multiple organ retrieval and exchange program of Ontario, founded by the ministry of health, was developed as the central registry of organ donors and recipients for Ontario to facilitate the equitable distribution of transplant organs in the province. Potential recipients, once registered and listed on the system, are eligible for the fast, efficient and equitable allocation of organ donors.

The Canadian organ replacement register includes data and analysis of kidney dialysis, organ donation and transplantation activities in Canada. The Canadian organ replacement register provides information on the level of activity and outcomes of dialysis in Canada.

The Canadian organ replacement register is managed by the Canadian Institute for Health Information. More Canadians are waiting for organ transplants and the numbers are rising annually, with kidneys in the greatest demand.

The best treatment replacing dialysis is a kidney transplant. The shortage of organ donations causes patients to be left on dialysis, which remains very costly.

We need to gather our resources to turn the desire to live into a realistic goal.

Because there are millions of people in Canada, the chances of finding an organ donor and recipient who are chemically compatible are significantly reasonable. However, testing for compatibility takes time. Minutes are critical when deciding where to transport the newly acquired organ.

• (1740)

As many as one-third of the potential donors remain unidentified or poorly managed. Another third is lost due to family or coroner refusal. The actual number of donors is only one-third of the potential.

This bill is about removing obstacles and creating a venue for change. Donors ensure a future for those in need of transplantation by providing the option for a longer life. There is an increasing demand for organ transplantation as the medical procedure maintains a high level of success. This demand has not been met due to the shortage of available organs.

The critical shortage of organs and tissues remains the most important challenge for health care professionals. The presence of a national organ and tissue sharing system would help to ensure safe, equitable and efficient transplantation in Canada.

We can see the positive effects of successful organ transplantation in our everyday lives.

The Canadian Transplant Games Association is a non-profit organization of transplant athletes and others committed to positively influencing public attitudes toward organ donation and motivating transplant recipients to maintain a healthy lifestyle by holding athletic events. Public awareness and community involvement can combine to offer help to needy recipients.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I want to compliment the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam for bringing this bill to the House. As he mentioned, it is a very important issue and one of the silent tragedies that has been occurring in our country for quite a long time. This problem existed at the time I was training to be a physician in the 1980s.

For a very long time we have had constructive solutions to deal with the issue of organ donation. Yet, while there has been widespread agreement on solutions, there has been a lack of action. We have seen the cycle go round and round. Solutions are proffered, agreements are made and yet we fall back to square one with nothing being done. No one takes the good ideas and puts them into action. That is why I welcome the member's bill. I hope it will be the catalyst that will finally push the minister and the government to act on the plethora of good solutions they have in their laps today.

Private Members' Business

As a nation we have one of the worst organ donor rates in the entire developed world. In fact, it is only about 12.1 per million. To put that into context, in the best circumstances there are about 36 per million in parts of the U.S. and Spain.

I would attribute our inaction on this issue to downright neglect. It is not an academic exercise. Of the more than 3,000 people who today sit on waiting lists, 150 or more of them will die needlessly. If there were a bus accident, a train crash or a plane crash and 150 people died, a national inquiry or a royal commission would be held immediately. In no short order solutions would be put forth and implemented. But because this issue is like a slow bleed which kills people over time it tends to be swept under the carpet.

For those people who are waiting for organs, for their families and loved ones who are watching them suffer, it is a painful existence. It is all the more painful because something could be done about it.

Something has been done about it.

As the member knows, in 1997 a motion was passed in the House of Commons detailing five points that would enable us to revamp the organ donor system in the country. It was supported by all members of the House and passed unanimously. It gave the minister a succinct plan of action which he could have implemented in 1997 and it would have had widespread acceptance.

Prior to that time the federal government and the provinces got together and agreed on a 13 point plan to revamp the organ donor system in our country. All provinces, including the province of Quebec, agreed to the national plan. The provinces were working with the federal government to do something for the public good. We were working as one.

• (1745)

Those solutions were again put on the back burner. In 1997, when I inquired about what was happening to these good solutions, I found that people were just sitting on their hands and nothing was happening while Canadians suffered and died.

Again I worked with the Minister of Health and, to his credit, he showed a great deal of interest in the issue. Through motions and procedures in the Standing Committee on Health, I and the Minister of Health asked the committee to study it. The committee worked together beautifully and heard fantastic testimony from people around the country and around the world.

Within the context of the testimony was a series of solutions and ideas that would give Canada the best organ donor system in the entire world in my view. In spite of the fact that we worked very well together, the final majority report, which had government stamped right on it, was a piece of pabulum. It was a piece of bureaucrat-speak. It did not do justice to the solutions that were put

Private Members' Business

forth at that committee for this year, nor did it do justice to the well-meaning people who came before the committee.

Unfortunately, all of us in the opposition put forth minority reports, not because we wanted to but because the government majority report was so lacking in direction, in specifics and in a plan of action that all of us felt compelled to put forth a plan of action.

The following is a plan of action that incorporates what the good member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam has put forth. It involves the following points.

First, we should have a national organ donor registry that involves both potential organs and potential donors, which in and of itself will not solve the problems. We need something else. We need a chance to be organ donors.

Second, on every patient's chart across the country, we should have a form asking people to be organ donors. When people go to their family doctor, the doctor will ask whether they want to be organ donors. If they agree to be donors, the doctor will give them a form and they can ask questions.

The form must have two things: first, a request to be a donor, and second, but equally important, a question asking if they have communicated their wishes to a loved one. The reason for this is very important. If people do not communicate their wishes to their loved ones about whether or not they want to be a donor, then their wishes will be respected only half the time.

In the event of the untimely death of a person who chooses to be a donor, half the time the family will override the wishes of their loved one. However, if people tell their families what they want to do regardless of their feelings, 96% of the time they will honour their loved one's wish to give the gift of life.

Third, we need organ donor co-ordinators in every hospital in the country. It can be an existing staff person with extra training who can seek permission for organ extraction from family members in times of bereavement.

Fourth, when a hospital is involved in procuring organs from a person who has died, it should receive money for the costs incurred in extracting the organs from that person. It is costly because it involves time in the intensive care unit and it involves personnel.

If those four points are followed, we will have the best organ donor system in the country. I plead with the Minister of Health not to wait any longer. It took the Minister of Health months to respond to the health care committee, and during the course of that month, in October, roughly 66 people died in the country while waiting for the minister to respond. That is not necessary.

On cold, hard, economic grounds, if we remove the obvious humanitarian reasons for pursuing this course, the cost savings to the health care system are quite extensive. For example, it costs \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year for somebody to be on dialysis. It costs about that much to have a kidney transplant. Over the course of five years, the health care system would save \$200,000 on every patient it dialyzed.

• (1750)

We must look into the future, into the crystal ball as we all get older. As the incidence of diabetes increases in certain populations and in the population as a whole, the demands on dialysis systems will increase dramatically. We must act now in a proactive way to give these people on dialysis the kidneys they need in order to prevent further tragedies.

It is not that we are going to somehow procure kidneys from people who are not dead. The people we get organs from are dead. For every organ donor who dies, five lives are saved. I compliment the families of the people who, through their untimely deaths, have made the ultimate sacrifice. Through their extraordinary generosity, they have given of themselves to give other people a new lease on life.

I make a plea to the public: If you want to be an organ donor, please sign your card and communicate your wishes to your loved ones.

I plead with the Minister of Health to support this bill, to support the motion I put forth which passed in this House, to support the work the committee did and to support the opposition members' solutions. Within that bundle of solutions are the best solutions to save Canadian lives. We need it and we need it now for the failure to act will only cost more people's lives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the hon. member on his bill. We are pleased to support the principle. Even if it will not be votable, we believe it is an excellent opportunity for parliamentarians to reflect on and support such a bill.

Before getting to the main thrust of the subject, I will take the liberty of being out of order for 30 seconds in order to keep a promise I have made relating to the 30th birthday of my colleague from Longueuil. On behalf of her husband Stéphane and her son Étienne, I wish her happy birthday from us all, for everyone knows that turning 30 is an important milestone in life. I am sure my colleagues join me in these wishes.

As for the bill, I repeat that we are pleased to support the principle, and I believe that there are a number of things that have to be said. First of all, unlike blood donations, organ donations are unfortunately not much of a part of Canadian culture.

Private Members' Business

Our Reform Party colleague reminded us earlier of the statistics: 12 per million, as compared to 36 per million in the United States. We realize that campaigns are necessary in order to raise awareness, and this is a collective responsibility.

As parliamentarians, it is our duty to show the way, to say that there are certain things that can be done. The first thing to do is to remind ourselves and our acquaintances to become potential donors. Indeed, we can only become actual donors by first being potential donors.

We support any measure to help co-ordinate such an initiative. Of course, such measures cannot be coercive, cannot be binding on the provinces. I think that the wording of the hon. member's bill is appropriate. Clause 6 provides that the registrar shall endeavour to ensure that the provinces participate in a number of co-ordinating measures. This takes us to the very unfair and incongruous situation of each of Quebec's regions.

Considering that a country as large as Canada—which, as we all know, includes two nations—only has 28 hospitals that do full grafts and organ or tissue transplants, it is appropriate to take a closer look at the services being provided.

The two provinces that provide full organ or tissue transplants are of course Quebec and Ontario. There are 11 institutions in Quebec and 8 in Ontario that provide such services.

• (1755)

Nova Scotia only has two such institutions, and that province serves all of Atlantic Canada. Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick do not have any hospitals that do organ or tissue transplants. In Manitoba, there is only one hospital providing that service, and the same goes for Saskatchewan. In the case of Alberta and British Columbia, there are three such institutions.

These services are still very limited and there is a need for information. We must urge stakeholders in the health care sector to do their share, because this is a responsibility that falls primarily to doctors.

It would be very interesting if doctors could find some delicate way—because a hospital setting is not always conducive to this kind of thinking—to ensure that potential donors are not lost.

I think it would be a good thing if doctors were encouraged to consider this possibility with patients who, of course, are often terminal, who have arrived, or are arriving at the final stage of their life. It is very important that we be able to impress on people how compassionate and generous an act this is, and how society as a whole will be the better for it. The extension of life and the improvement of individuals' quality of life lie behind the reality of organ donation, but there is also an economic reality. I think one of our colleagues made this point earlier.

In the case of kidney disease, for instance, it would be much more economical for society to encourage organ donation than to continue to do dialysis, with all the equipment that entails. It has often been estimated that the cost could be as much as five times higher. In other words, it costs society five times as much to continue with and promote dialysis as it does to promote organ donation. That is the point we are making.

I do not wish to take up more time than necessary, but I commend the hon. member's sensitivity in introducing his bill. Let us hope that, even if it is not votable, the government will act very quickly on the parliamentary committee's report. I want those who are listening to us—I realize that we are not normally allowed to use documents, but I am counting on the full co-operation of the House in this regard—to know that a parliamentary committee addressed this issue and tabled its report in April 1999.

This report was prepared by parliamentarians, with one member from each party represented in the House working on it. I would say that, on the substance, the committee was unanimous. There were dissenting reports with regard to the form because some thought the proposed measures did not go far enough, but everyone agreed on the principle of establishing a national registry and co-ordinating efforts to ensure that, wherever we live, be it Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario or the Maritimes, someone is keeping track of how many organs are available for those who need them, and there is a need to quickly identify potential donors so that they are not lost.

This report, which was tabled in April 1999 as I indicated earlier, called on the government to take prompt measures and contained about 20 recommendations. Again, I believe there was a consensus on the principle.

Therefore, we support the bill introduced by our colleague and commend him for his initiative. I hope the government will follow this bill up with implementation measures.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this debate and to join with others in the House who have indicated their support for Bill C-227.

• (1800)

I too want to congratulate the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam for bringing this matter before the House.

At the very outset I want to indicate our strong support for this bill. Why do I support the bill? Why do my colleagues in the New Democratic Party support the bill? Why do all members in the opposition parties support the bill? It calls for something that was recommended to the member's government many months ago. It

Private Members' Business

was the logical step required by the government to deal with a very critical situation.

One wonders, if this bill had been votable, where the Liberal members would have stood. Would they support this bill given the past record, the agony, the kind of deliberations and intensive study all of us have been through over the last six months to a year?

This bill calls for a national organ donor registry. It is something that was recommended by many witnesses before the health committee, which went through six months of deliberations. That idea was supported by every opposition party in the House yet it was vetoed, wiped out, stamped out by the Liberal majority on the health committee. The question we all have today is why? Can the member who has brought forward this bill not make a difference in terms of his own caucus and get through to the Minister of Health to put this item on the agenda today? Why do we have to continually wait and debate something on which there is a clear consensus and an absolute need?

Madam Speaker, you will sense the frustration of opposition members around this bill. It is not because we do not support the idea. It is because we know that this idea could have been implemented at least six months ago when the Standing Committee on Health completed its deliberations following six months of studying the matter. We express frustration today because there are models the government could have used to implement such a strategy which are already in the works in the country.

The member referred to the B.C. NDP government's registry. Other governments are looking at this as a model. The Yukon government feels very strongly about adopting something similar. I am sure provincial and territorial governments right across the country would only be too pleased to join in the creation of such a registry, except that we do not have a federal government that is prepared to show some leadership, put some money on the table, show some political will and get this thing moving.

My colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca also deserves some credit for advancing the public and political agenda on this matter. His private member's motion got the ball rolling. It could have been acted on very quickly, but the Liberal government decided it needed to keep the health committee busy reviewing the same studies that have made the same recommendations for the last number of years.

None of us regret the time we spent talking to witnesses and discussing the important issues around organ donation and transplantation. However, we all thought that when that process was over we would at least march forward with a clear plan of action. Fundamental to that plan of action was a national donor registry.

I wanted to mention the work of the Reform Party's health critic in this area. Again I express regrets over the inaction of the federal government on this very important matter.

We have heard the stats over and over again. Canada has one of the lowest donor rates in the western industrial world. Our rate of donation is about 14.5 donors per million.

• (1805)

Mr. Keith Martin: It is 12.1.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: The Reform member has corrected me. It is only 12.1 donors per million.

That rate of donation is appallingly low. The rate could be much higher if we had a government that was prepared to work with Canadians and provincial governments to advance a workable, reasonable strategy to encourage Canadians to indicate their wishes at an early opportunity, and to ensure there is a mechanism to follow through on the wishes of the donor and the donor's family.

What is the situation? The Liberals are treading water while our need for organ donation is growing.

The Reform health critic mentioned the situation with respect to dialysis. Figures released this summer by the Canadian Institute for Health Information show that we are headed toward a crisis in kidney dialysis unless some relief is forthcoming from organ donation. Dialysis needs increased by 14% in one year between 1996 and 1997. What does that cost? It costs \$50,000 per year to maintain each patient. The number of patients is at 12,000 and is rising.

We can look at this from the human point of view and talk about the stress on individuals and families who are waiting for organ donations. We can talk about the unnecessary deaths that occur because this country does not have a good system for encouraging organ donations.

If that does not work for the government, at least look at the costs. Look at the economic factors. Look at the financial burden this is creating for our society today, at the very time when we should be trying like we have never tried before to ensure efficiencies in our health care system so that we can do everything we can to preserve our universal health care model.

The public will support it. We heard the witnesses before our committee. We heard Canadians everywhere say that they are supportive of a system to increase the rate of donations. They cannot do it by themselves. We need a system that ensures we can implement the recommendations of the studies we have heard time and time again.

What is preventing us from moving ahead? Why are we debating this again in the House? It is undeniably the Liberal government's unfathomable reluctance to act. If it was consciously trying to stall, it could not be moving any slower. I hope the member will take

that message back to his caucus, to the cabinet and to the Minister of Health.

All of us submitted minority reports in response to the health committee's final report on organ donation. Why? Because it was missing a very important central element: a national organ donor registry. Thank goodness it is before us again today. We can keep the debate going, but we still come back to the question of why we have to debate it. Why was it not already in place, up and running and working?

When this country does not have a national organ donor registry and there is not a meaningful system to encourage donations and ensure we can meet the demand, the human costs are unbearable. People die. Families suffer.

On top of that, we are also creating a climate for xeno transplantation to take hold. It could go forward without any kind of public debate or consultation, without any kind of regulatory framework, without any ethical considerations being given to the whole question of using animal organs to deal with human needs for organ transplantation.

Department officials told the health committee that xeno transplantation was not taking place in Canada. That was in February 1999. What did we find out after that? That animal transplants were actually taking place in hospitals in this country.

An article came out this past summer in *This* magazine. It showed that transplantations using animal organs in humans were done as far back as 1994 in Montreal. It was done again in 1997, and there was a third case in 1997. All three were done at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal. This government says it does not have a clue that anything is going on and there is no plan in place to deal with it.

Given those factors, the time to act is now. I hope we can get on with the task at hand and ensure that we move forward with a national organ donor registry.

• (1810)

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, this debate really should not have to take place and if you have listened carefully as I have to everyone who has spoken this evening on the private member's bill, there is nothing new here at all. The government has simply failed to act. I think the NDP member articulated that very well. The Liberals know what they have to do or should do, but they will not do it. Why? For the love of me, I do not know.

The hon. member's point of referring this to the member whose bill we are actually debating is a good point. He should go back to

Private Members' Business

his caucus, go back to the Prime Minister and the cabinet and impress upon them the importance of moving forward on a national donor registry and transplant system.

We have heard it all before. There is unanimous consent in the House on the issue. A little over two years ago the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca put forward Motion No. 222 to that effect. It was unanimously agreed upon by the House. I will read it word for word, and I hope the member whose bill we are debating takes this back to the Prime Minister tomorrow morning when the Liberals have their caucus meeting.

By unanimous consent, it was resolved:

That in the opinion of this House, the government should:

(a) implement a national real time database linking all health care facilities involved in transplantation and transplantable tissue procurement, and listing all potential organ transplant recipients and available transplantable tissue;

(b) implement a national mandated choice strategy for tissue donation through a mechanism such as the federal income tax return or the census;

(c) remove all financial disincentives that presently exist for health care facilities involved in transplantable tissue procurement; and

(d) bring in legislation in order to protect the rights and wishes of those who, upon declaration of brain death diagnosis, have previously consented to donate their organs.

The member who authored that motion is here listening intently as I knew he would be. The government, in typical government fashion, referred it to the standing committee. As the NDP member mentioned we had hearings that lasted about six months. We came up with a report of around 100 pages, in both official languages, on what the committee thought should happen. The committee was driven somewhat by the government. It was another foot dragging exercise. We could see that in the report.

There was nothing new or startling in the report. We had a sense that the minister was directing the outcome. That is not unusual. What we did, and I say we, is that a minority opposition report was authored by the Reform Party. I am quite pleased to point out that I signed on to this and I will read the notation:

We, the members of the Reform Party of Canada and Mr. Greg Thompson of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, respectfully submit this official opposition report in response to the Standing Committee on Health's study on organ and tissue donation in Canada.

There were five of us on the committee who signed that. There was the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, the member for Surrey Central, the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan and myself, the member for New Brunswick Southwest.

If I have the time, I want to go through some of the points we made. Some of them were articulated by the government member whose bill we are discussing and the opposition members who talked in detail on the bill.

Private Members' Business

● (1815)

His bill includes some of what we were talking about in that minority report. I do not think his goes quite far enough. This is what the government should be doing, as articulated in that minority report. Let us step through them.

We are calling for more immediate action. I was talking about the foot dragging on the part of the government. We want immediate action. As I said earlier this evening, we should not have to debate this matter. It has been debated over and over again. No one disagrees, particularly the Canadian public whom we are attempting to serve in this place.

We are calling for immediate action to create two national registries. The first would be a real time national waiting list of potential recipients and the second would be a real time national waiting list of intended donors.

There should be mandatory reporting of all brain deaths to the national organ transplant co-ordinator. This would facilitate quicker identification of people willing to donate and of the suitability of donations. It would also link donors to patients more quickly.

We would identify and educate hospital staff and separate the medical professionals who treat the deceased patient and those approaching the surviving family members.

We would increase opportunities to become an organ donor, such as a form sent once a year to doctors' offices, for example. We are saying that the form should contain three parts: first, an explanation of organ donation; second, a request to be an intended donor; and third, a request that potential donors discuss their wishes with loved ones.

Funds should be available from shared federal, provincial and territorial contributions. The money should be targeted for organ transplantation. Recipients of organs should be able to meet the families of the donor if both parties are in agreement.

The last one is very important. It does not sound like much, but it is recognition. A medal should be awarded to the donors or their families by the governor general.

As we have been reminded in the House tonight, an average of 150 Canadians die every year waiting for organ transplants. I would say that number is smaller than it would be if we actually had a databank and we could exchange or share information the way we should be able to. We do not and we cannot. I think that number is very small compared to what is the reality.

While I am on my feet I want to point out that I am a transplant recipient. I was very fortunate because in my case it was bone marrow and it was not as difficult to find a donor. I could be my own donor. Because of medical technology and the advances of

medical science I was able to donate my own bone marrow after it was purified, for lack of a better expression.

We should think of the hundreds of Canadians who are waiting for the same type of transplant procedure and there is no one there to help them out. The sad part is that they are there, but there is no way to hook them up or connect them up. We know it can work if we want to invest the time and the technology into that process.

Truly I would not be here if that procedure had not taken place. I was very fortunate because I could be my own donor and not all recipients are that fortunate.

The time has come and the message is pretty clear from all sides of the House that we want action on the part of the government. It has derailed, stalled, and thrown up every obstacle it could to keep the issue from moving forward.

I want to conclude by saying that regrettably this is not a votable motion, but we support the hon. member's initiative. We want the government to listen. The message coming out of the House tonight is that we want action and we want it now.

● (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the floor for five minutes to speak on Bill C-227. I want to thank the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam for bringing the issue of organ and human tissue donations to the attention of the House.

The hon. member will remember that, last year, the health minister asked the Standing Committee on Health to consider this issue. The minister was right to rely on the committee, given that it heard hundreds of witnesses. We in the government do not consider that consulting witnesses and listening to the people is a waste of time, contrary to what some of the opposition members said earlier.

[*English*]

During these consultations two main points consistently surfaced: the need for a central co-ordinating and facilitating body to bring together elements across jurisdictions and the need for greater public education and awareness of the issue.

That is why the government endorses the principle of Bill C-227 and approves its global purpose to improve co-ordination and education in order to increase organ and tissue donation rates in Canada which are much too weak. We also agree that Canadians should have easier and better opportunities to indicate their wish to be potential organ donors and that medical professionals have access to this information.

[*Translation*]

Also, Bill C-227 urges the federal government to act by establishing first and foremost a national organ donor registry.

I want to remind the House that some witnesses told the committee that Canada needs this kind of database. Others argued however that this may not be the most efficient way to address the issue. They cited the example of Great Britain and Spain. Even without a national registry, Spain has a much higher rate of real organ donations than Canada does.

Great Britain set up such a registry that has not been very successful. The registration level has dropped over the last few years.

In Canada, provinces like BC and Nova Scotia already have registries while others, like Quebec and Ontario, are looking into it. The Standing Committee on Health took notice of the work done by provincial governments. In its report, it recognized that provincial and territorial governments have many good tools at their disposal to encourage larger numbers of people to become donors. Considering what the provinces are already doing, the committee did not believe that establishing a national registry along the lines of the bill was a priority.

As early as mid-April, the Standing Committee on Health recommended greater co-operation between all partners: the federal government, the provinces, the territories, the care givers and the health care institutions. The government chose to rely on co-operation and has made headway.

[*English*]

We have been and will continue to work closely with the provinces and other stakeholders to develop a new approach to organ donation. This will include Canada-wide standards to ensure the safety of transplantation and a comprehensive and sustainable plan for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Our challenge will be to find an appropriate approach for Canada, which is a federation where responsibility over health is shared between the federal and the provincial and territorial governments.

[*English*]

Fundamental to this approach is a partnership with provinces that was agreed to by federal, provincial and territorial health ministers at their September 1999 annual meeting in Charlottetown before the government response had been made public within five months from the publishing of the committee's report.

Many ministers approved the establishment of a council on organ and tissue donation and transplantation in Canada and the

Private Members' Business

guiding principles which will govern its operation once a business plan has been adopted. This plan is to implement a co-ordinated, comprehensive and integrated donation and transplantation strategy across Canada.

[*Translation*]

I know that we do not have much time. An eleven-point action plan was adopted by the federal and provincial health ministers in September and I think that we made important progress on that issue in the last while.

I ask our colleague and the members of the opposition to recognize that we are taking our responsibilities in this respect. I urge them all to support our approach and congratulate the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam on raising once again this issue in the House.

• (1825)

[*English*]

Mr. Lou Sekora (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to have support across the House. It makes me feel very good. The fact is that I did make this presentation to a subcommittee that was not made up of Liberals only. The fact is that there were other members who must have voted against this bill being a votable bill. Otherwise it would have been a votable bill. It could not be defeated just by members on this side of the House.

I am delighted. The fact is I knew the bill had great support from all sides of the House. When I asked for 100 signatures I could have got 100 signatures on either side of the House. It was supportable. The good doctor in the Reform Party has made some great comments. He is a physician and knows what he is talking about. I was delighted to hear those comments. I was delighted to hear all the comments that have been made, especially those from the Progressive Conservative member who had a transplant. I did not know he was a recipient of a transplant.

We talked about price tags and costs today and everything else, but we should keep in mind that if we save one life we cannot put a price tag on it. A good friend of mine who was a council member with me in Coquitlam before I was elected as a mayor lost his wife after five years on kidney dialysis. Can we imagine the cost of that? Finally they could not find a transplant and she died.

Many provinces probably think about the cost of transplants, but as the good doctor across the floor said the fact is the cost is very cheap compared to the cost of keeping people on dialysis, waiting for a transplant that may never happen. We can only imagine the trauma families must go through, waiting and hoping that their little child or some other loved one will get a transplant so that he or she can lead a normal life.

Adjournment Debate

I have spoken to the health minister and will continue to speak to him and to all members of the House. I am not giving up on this one. I have never given up on the many things I have brought before the House as the new member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

I brought before the House the leaky condo situation. I am not giving up on that and I am not giving up on this one. The fact is that it is an issue with me which I will be fighting every day of the week. I ask all members on all sides of the House to give me a hand and come forward in this discussion, this debate and this fight. We will win.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped from the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

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

APEC INQUIRY

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Madam Speaker, on October 29 I asked the Deputy Prime Minister a question about the APEC inquiry's chief lawyer, Marvin Storrow.

Mr. Storrow, who in his position with the APEC commission was supposed to remain at arm's length from the Liberal government, ended up dining with the Prime Minister at a \$400 a plate fundraiser. I asked the Deputy Prime Minister why his government defined arm's length as being close enough to pass the pepper.

Mr. Storrow denied that his attendance at that dinner would compromise his impartiality at the inquiry, the same inquiry that may eventually call the Prime Minister to testify. Indeed it would have been Mr. Storrow who would have had the power of part of the decision making process to decide whether or not the Prime Minister should testify at the inquiry. Mr. Storrow still denied any conflict of interest but since then has actually done the right thing and resigned from the commission because of the perception of a problem there.

In response to my initial question in the House the Deputy Prime Minister told the House that the commission was well equipped to deal with matters of this kind and to let the commission do its

work, which we have heard over and over again from the government.

Let us take a look at the work the commission has done so far. This is not the first scandal to have led to a resignation in the APEC affair.

• (1830)

Just about a year ago we all know that the former solicitor general was overheard on an airplane explaining to a friend that Staff Sergeant Hugh Stewart would take the fall for the pepper spraying of APEC student protesters. The then solicitor general categorically denied in the House day after day that he had done anything to undermine the important work of the arm's length commission, but finally he too resigned.

That is not all. Also last year the entire original three member panel resigned after an RCMP officer said he heard one of the members discussing the outcome of the inquiry at a Saskatchewan casino. That member denied the accusation but in the end it was he and two of the panel members who resigned.

The APEC inquiry is looking a bit more like a three ring circus. It has gone on now for two years. The government keeps feeding its media lines and spin about the commission doing its work rather than actually getting to the bottom of this incident, which could be cleared up very clearly by the Prime Minister's own testimony as to the involvement of the Prime Minister's Office in APEC security arrangements. Instead of hearing these lines, stalling and jokes about pepper spraying, we would like some answers.

Why does the government continue to engage in this process instead of simply getting the Prime Minister to the point where he is able to testify before the commission? I am afraid my colleague on the other side will say that he has not been called yet.

Let us clear up once and for all what the Prime Minister's involvement was in this APEC security scandal. It has gone on for two years. It continues to go on. We have seen people resigning and it is going on and on. We want some answers. We would like them today. We would like the Prime Minister to testify and tell us exactly what his role was in the APEC security scandal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Saada (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Dewdney Alouette worries because the lawyer representing the RCMP Public Complaints Commission at the APEC hearings attended a fundraising dinner in Vancouver.

I cannot understand how such a question could be raised in the House. Unless my colleague does not understand the first thing about the legislation as it stands and its mechanisms. This matter has strictly nothing to do with the government.

Adjournment Debate

I will explain for the umpteenth time, in the hope that the message will get across a little bit better this time.

The complaints commission was established in 1986 to investigate complaints made by the public against members of the RCMP.

Under the 1986 legislation, the commission is an independent administrative tribunal. It conducts investigations as it deems appropriate and is accountable for its practices and procedures. It is operating at arm's length from the government. That fact should be emphasized and repeated again, and I would repeat it in 15 different languages if I could: the commission is operating at arm's length from the government.

In the APEC hearings, the chairperson of the commission appointed Mr. Ted Hughes to deal specifically with the events that took place in Vancouver.

Mr. Hughes has a great reputation as an experienced lawyer and, under his direction, the hearings have made considerable progress.

To date, more than 60 witnesses have been heard. I think Mr. Hughes has given all possible assurances that his work is absolutely honest and beyond reproach. In fact, that in itself is the best guarantee that the Canadian public will know exactly what happened at the APEC summit.

In performing his duties, Mr. Hughes recruited Mr. Marvin Storrow, who is the lawyer in question; he attended a fundraising dinner and has resigned, not to bring the work he was doing into disrepute.

The commission has nothing to do—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary, but time has run out.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.34 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Business Registration

Ms. Leung 1321

Taxation

Mr. Strahl 1321

International Day of Tolerance

Mrs. Bakopanos 1321

Canadian Forces

Mr. O'Brien (London—Fanshawe) 1321

Taxation

Mr. Epp 1322

Youth Violence

Mr. Cadman 1322

Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar

Ms. McDonough 1322

Diabetes

Mr. Myers 1322

Visit to Africa

Ms. Augustine 1323

Louis Riel

Mrs. Jennings 1323

Niobec Mine

Ms. Girard—Bujold 1323

Endangered Species

Mr. Borotsik 1323

1998 Ice Storm

Mr. Drouin 1323

Byelections

Mr. Limoges 1324

1979 Mississauga Train Derailment

Mr. Mahoney 1324

Confidential Documents

Mrs. Guay 1324

Agriculture

Mr. Ritz 1324

Louis Riel

Mr. Laliberte 1325

Budget Surpluses

Mr. Harvey 1325

University of Guelph

Mrs. Chamberlain 1325

Health Care

Ms. Wasylycia—Leis 1325

Taxation

Mr. Solberg 1325

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Aboriginal Affairs

Mr. Manning 1326

Mr. Gray 1326

 Mr. Manning 1326

 Mr. Gray 1326

Mr. Manning 1326

Mr. Nault 1326

Miss Grey 1326

Mr. Nault 1326

 Miss Grey 1327

 Mr. Gray 1327

World Trade Organization

Mr. Duceppe 1327

Mr. Pettigrew 1327

 Mr. Duceppe 1327

 Mr. Pettigrew 1327

Mr. Marceau 1327

Mr. Pettigrew 1327

 Mr. Marceau 1327

 Mr. Pettigrew 1328

Child Poverty

Ms. McDonough 1328

Mrs. Stewart (Brant) 1328

 Ms. McDonough 1328

 Mrs. Stewart (Brant) 1328

CSIS

Mr. MacKay 1328

Mr. MacAulay 1328

 Mr. MacKay 1328

 Mr. MacAulay 1328

Nisga'a Treaty

Mr. Cummins 1329

Mr. Dhaliwal 1329

 Mr. Cummins 1329

 Mr. Nault 1329

World Trade Organization

Mr. de Savoye 1329

Mr. Pettigrew 1329

 Mr. de Savoye 1329

 Mr. Pettigrew 1329

CSIS

Mr. Abbott 1329

Mr. MacAulay 1329

 Mr. Abbott 1329

 Mr. MacAulay 1330

Transfer Payments

Mr. Gauthier 1330

Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 1330

 Mr. Gauthier 1330

 Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard) 1330

CSIS

Mr. Manning 1330

Mr. MacAulay 1330

 Mr. Manning 1330

 Mr. Gray 1330

Canadian Security Intelligence Service

Mr. Bellehumeur 1330

Mr. MacAulay 1331

Earthquake in Turkey

Mr. McWhinney 1331

Ms. Minna 1331

Canada Elections Act

Mr. White (North Vancouver) 1331

Mr. Boudria	1331
Mr. White (North Vancouver)	1331
Mr. Boudria	1331
Trade	
Ms. Davies	1331
Mr. Pettigrew	1331
Mr. Robinson	1332
Mr. Pettigrew	1332
Canadian Security Intelligence Service	
Mr. Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	1332
Mr. MacAulay	1332
Mr. Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	1332
Mr. MacAulay	1332
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	
Mr. Provenzano	1332
Mr. Goodale	1332
Correctional Service Canada	
Mr. Thompson (Wild Rose)	1332
Mr. MacAulay	1332
Citizenship	
Mr. Bigras	1333
Ms. Caplan	1333
Genetically Engineered Foods	
Ms. Wasylcyia—Leis	1333
Mr. Vanclief	1333
Solicitor General of Canada	
Mr. MacKay	1333
Mr. MacAulay	1333
Organ Donations	
Mr. Malhi	1333
Mr. Rock	1333
Correctional Service Canada	
Mr. Thompson (Wild Rose)	1334
Mr. MacAulay	1334
Genetically Modified Foods	
Ms. Alarie	1334
Mr. Vanclief	1334
Nuclear Waste	
Mr. Mancini	1334
Mr. Goodale	1334
CSIS	
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	1334
Mr. MacAulay	1334
Agriculture	
Mr. Hoepfner	1334
Mr. Vanclief	1334
Goods and Services Tax	
Mr. Nunziata	1335
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	1335
Privilege	
Oral Question Period	
Mr. Duceppe	1335
The Speaker	1335

Mr. Pettigrew	1335
Mr. Duceppe	1335
Mr. Boudria	1335

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Municipal Grants Act

Bill C-10. Second reading	1336
Mr. Mark	1336
Mr. MacKay	1338
Mr. Casson	1338
Mr. Mark	1338
Mr. Ramsay	1338
Mr. Mark	1338
Mr. Ramsay	1339
Mr. Mark	1339
Mr. McNally	1339
Mr. Myers	1339
Mr. McNally	1339
Mr. Adams	1340
Mr. McNally	1340
Mr. Wilfert	1342
Mr. McNally	1343
Ms. Catterall	1343
Mr. McNally	1344
Ms. Catterall	1344
Mr. McNally	1344
Mr. Abbott	1344
Mr. Adams	1347
Mr. Abbott	1347
Ms. Parrish	1348
Mr. Abbott	1348
Mr. Ramsay	1348
Mr. Mancini	1351
Mr. Ramsay	1351
Mr. Konrad	1351
Mr. Ramsay	1351
Ms. Parrish	1352
Mr. Ramsay	1352
Mr. Cummins	1352
Ms. Parrish	1354
Mr. Cummins	1354

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Organ Donation Act

Bill C-227. Second reading	1355
Mr. Sekora	1355
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	1357
Mr. Ménard	1358
Ms. Wasylcyia—Leis	1359
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	1360
Ms. Wasylcyia—Leis	1360
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	1361
Mr. Charbonneau	1362
Mr. Sekora	1363

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

APEC Inquiry

Mr. McNally	1364
Mr. Saada	1364

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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