



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 24, 2005

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 24, 2005

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*English*]

CANADA ACCOUNT REPORT 2003-04

Hon. Mark Eyking (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade (Emerging Markets), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the Canada Account annual report 2003-04.

* * *

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

CANADA HEALTH INFOWAY

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the annual report 2004-05 and corporate business plan 2005-06 for Canada Health Infoway.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the government's response to three petitions.

* * *

SECURITY COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT

Hon. Belinda Stronach (for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-81, An Act to establish the National Security Committee of Parliamentarians.

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

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association which represented Canada at the spring session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly held in Lubiana, Slovenia.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association which represented Canada at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's economic and security committee in Beijing and Shanghai, China.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association which represented Canada at the joint meeting of the defence and security, economics and security and political committees, and at the annual economics and security committee consultation with the OECD held in Brussels, Belgium and Paris, France.

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the OSCE Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association which represented Canada at the winter meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Vienna, Austria on February 24 and 25, 2005.

I would like also to present to the House pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the OSCE Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association which represented Canada at the annual session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Washington, D.C. in the United States on July 1 to 5, 2005.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present two reports.

First, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Canada-Japan Interparliamentary Group representing the participation at the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Conference on Renewable Energies held in Gifu, Japan on June 4, 2005.

Routine Proceedings

Second, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Canada-Japan Interparliamentary Group representing the participation in the 26th General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization held in Vientiane, Laos, September 18 to 23.

* * *

●(1010)

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 54th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), this report contains the list of items added to the order of precedence under private members' business on November 14, which should not be designated non-votable.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), this report is deemed concurred in.

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), your committee has considered the recent Canadian Broadcasting Corporation lock-out and has agreed to report to the House its recommendations.

I also have the honour to present the 19th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), your committee undertook in February a study on the Canadian feature film industry and has agreed to report its findings and recommendations to the House.

The committee started the study on February 10 and held 36 meetings. It travelled to Winnipeg, Vancouver, Toronto, Halifax and Montreal and met with more than 80 organizations. The report makes 30 recommendations. I want to pay tribute to the committee members who worked with great collegiality throughout the development of this report, right up to the last moment yesterday, and to our staff who worked all night to ensure we could table the report today.

* * *

YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-453, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act (publication of information).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the Youth Criminal Justice Act now precludes the publication of information of young offenders to be released when they are sentenced after they have reached the age of 18. The bill, if passed, will allow for the publication of information

about young offenders who are sentenced as adults over the age of 18.

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

* * *

CANADIAN AUTISM DAY ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-454, An Act respecting a Canadian Autism Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a bill which all members of Parliament in the House and in the Senate can eventually agree with.

What we are trying to do is make April 23 national autism day to bring awareness to the fact that 1 out of every 190 children in this country are born with some form of autism and how they are not even covered under the provincial, territorial or federal health acts.

With a day of recognition hopefully we will all understand and recognize the difficulties families with children with autism have, so we can move them toward becoming a progressive part of our future.

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

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CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-455, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (blood alcohol content).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, for seconding the bill.

Since the passing of our friend, a member of this House, Chuck Cadman, this is the first opportunity to introduce a Chuck Cadman bill. Chuck had worked for years to see that the impaired level for alcohol be lowered from .08 to .05. We have endorsements from Chuck's family, from police chiefs across the country and from MADD Canada.

This is a good bill and it honours our friend.

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

* * *

●(1015)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-456, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (parental responsibility).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to introduce parental responsibility as a key principle in our youth criminal justice system. In making parents responsible in part for the actions of their children, it reads:

Every parent or guardian of a person under the age of eighteen years who contributes, through negligence, inappropriate action or lack of appropriate action, to behaviour that leads the person to commit an offence is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

Routine Proceedings

In other words, it brings the principle of vicarious sentencing into our justice system and ensures that parents will be liable to ensure that their children do not commit crimes that affect victims in the community.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners draw the attention of the House to the fact that the International Joint Commission, which administers the Canada-United States Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, recommended in 1992 that Canada and the United States develop timetables to sunset the use of chlorine in the Great Lakes watershed.

Forcing campgrounds, restaurants, trailer parks and rural churches to chlorinate drinking water will cost thousands of dollars they do not have and it violates the chlorinated substances action plan and the international agreement. Scientific evidence was the basis for chlorinated waste water effluent being added to the list of toxic substances in 1993. Therefore, the petitioners are calling upon Parliament to instruct the federal environment minister to impose a moratorium on the expanded use of chlorination in small rural applications until further study on the alternatives is completed.

COPYRIGHT ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have petitions on three subjects.

The first is from petitioners in my community of Burnaby—New Westminster and elsewhere in the lower mainland, Vancouver Island and Alberta. Regarding the Copyright Act, these petitioners call upon Parliament to ensure generally that users are recognized as interested parties and are meaningfully consulted about proposed changes to the Copyright Act, and to ensure in particular that any changes at least preserve all existing users' rights, including the right to use copyrighted materials under fair dealing and the right to make private copies of audio recordings.

They further call upon Parliament not to extend the term of copyright and to recognize the rights of citizens to personally control their own communication devices.

• (1020)

FIRE RETARDANTS

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second group includes petitioners from Toronto, Ottawa and Salmon Arm and Enderby, B.C. These petitioners call upon the House of Commons to support Motion No. 275 by the MP for Burnaby—New Westminster, which states that, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize that fire retardants containing polybrominated diphenyl ethers, PBDEs, pose a danger to people, animals and the environment, and that legislation completely phasing out the production and import of products containing additive PBDEs should be brought forth within a year.

[*Translation*]

CANADA HEALTH ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by more than 700 citizens from Vancouver Island, Blainville, Laval, Montreal, Toronto, Gatineau, Sorel-Tracy, LaSalle, Saint-Hubert, Ottawa, Quebec City and the James Bay area.

These petitioners are calling on Parliament to amend the Canada Health Act and related regulations to include early intensive behaviour intervention therapy based on the principles of applied behaviour analysis as a medically necessary treatment for children with autism, and to contribute to the creation of academic chairs at a university in each province to ensure that intensive behavioural intervention therapy is available to people across Canada.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition containing approximately 100 signatures. These petitioners call on the government to update the Food and Drugs Act to include medicinal foods, herbs, spices, and dietary supplements as food products.

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the great honour to present a petition on behalf of residents of Kingston and the Islands who call to the attention of Parliament the period from 1965 to 1973 when more than 50,000 draft age Americans made their way to Canada and were granted refuge here. The petitioners call on the government to demonstrate its commitment to international law and treaties by making provision for U.S. war objectors who have sanctuary in this country.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting three petitions on behalf of the good people of Calgary Northeast. In the first, petitioners pray that Parliament pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my second petition the petitioners call upon Parliament to provide Canadians with greater access to non-drug preventative medicinal options as well as the information about these options and to sanction the personal choices of Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

AUTISM

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the third petition the petitioners call upon Parliament to amend the Canada Health Act and corresponding regulations to include IBI-ABA therapy for children with autism as a medically necessary treatment and require that all provinces provide or fund this essential treatment for autism.

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from the residents of Thunder Bay—Rainy River calling upon Parliament to amend the Income Tax Act in order to permit a pension from a registered pension fund to be split between spouses.

LNG TERMINALS

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed mostly by New Brunswick citizens and also other citizens of Canada who are suggesting that the Government of Canada exercise its sovereign rights and say no to the transport of LNG tankers through Head Harbour Passage, the most dangerous waterway in all of Canada.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to protect our citizens, our economy and our environment and say no to those very dangerous tankers going through those very dangerous waters.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. 240 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 240—**Ms. Alexa McDonough:**

With regard to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA): (a) how many Atlantic Lighthouse Council (ALC) projects did ACOA fund from January 1999 to present; (b) how much ACOA funding was allocated to each of these projects; and (c) were there any written proposals submitted by the ALC for these projects and, if so, what are the details of the proposals and of audits conducted on the use of these funds?

Hon. Joe McGuire (Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, insofar as the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, ACOA, is concerned, no Atlantic lighthouse council project was funded by ACOA from January 1999 to October 31, 2005

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 184—for a supplementary response—and Questions Nos. 195, 198, 212 and 226 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 184—**Mr. Bill Casey:**

With regard to the government's position and actions regarding employment insurance (EI) benefits for spouses of employees of the government or private sector employees who have been posted overseas and who are unable to receive unemployment insurance benefits, even though these citizens are still registered in constituencies across Canada: (a) how many spouses of Canadian diplomats, Canadian foreign-service employees or private sector employees have filed complaints with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), or Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) with regard to their inability to receive EI benefits, even though they are still Canadian citizens who are registered in federal constituencies across Canada and still pay taxes to the government; (b) does the CRA collect the payment of EI premiums from the spouses of Canada's diplomats, foreign-service employees and those from the private sector, and, if so, why is it that these individuals cannot receive the EI benefits for which they have paid through their salaries, and earned from Canadian employers either just prior to, or while living overseas; (c) is there a conflict between the CRA and HRSDC definitions of residency of a Canadian citizen and, if so, why; (d) has any action taken place between officials of CRA, HRSDC, Foreign Affairs Canada or Elections Canada to update or correct conflicts in the definition process for determining an individual's residency; (e) has any action taken place within the CRA to update the NR-73 Determination of Residency Status form and resulting process to correct any determination conflicts with those of other federal departments for Canadians living and working overseas; (f) have HRSDC, CRA, Elections Canada or Foreign Affairs Canada ever discussed using a standardized or shared definition for determining who is a "spouse", in cases of spouses of government (including diplomatic and foreign-service staff) or private sector employees who have been posted overseas and wish to claim employment insurance benefits; (g) which nations does Canada have reciprocal treaties/agreements enabling the payment of employment insurance benefits to Canadians outside of Canada, and when were these treaties/agreements established; (h) is the government actively negotiating with any other nations with regard to achieving a reciprocal employment insurance agreement; (i) has the government sought, or been approached, to establish reciprocal treaties or employment insurance agreements with Canada's NAFTA partners, with the European Union or any of its member states, the United Kingdom or any other G-8 nation; (j) was the subject of reciprocal employment insurance benefits treaties or agreements discussed or proposed during the drafting of Canada's newest foreign policy review, or in negotiations with the World Trade Organization, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations, or the Trade and Investment Agreement negotiations; and if so, what concerns or suggestions were raised regarding the implementation of these EI treaties or agreements; (k) have any spouses of Canada's diplomatic corps or foreign-service employees been contacted with regard to ascertaining their opinions or suggestions for improving the present conflict with employment insurance benefit regulations; and (l) what progress has Foreign Affairs Canada, HRSDC and CRA achieved towards creating a solution to spousal overseas EI issues?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 195—**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:**

With regard to the federal funding of centennial celebrations in the province of Saskatchewan for 2004 and 2005: (a) which organizations and governments received funding; (b) how much did each organization and government receive; and (c) were there any pre-existing criteria determining which organizations and governments would be eligible to receive this funding, and, if so, what were they?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 198—**Mr. John Reynolds:**

In relation to the dinner that followed the installation of Her Excellency the Governor General: (a) who made the decision not to hold the reception at Rideau Hall, as is customarily done; (b) why was the decision made; and (c) who was on the guest list?

(Return tabled)

*Supply*Question No. 212—**Mr. Tony Martin:**

With regard to the testimony given by Mr. Michael Saucier (Director General, Labour Market and Official Language Minority Communities, Department of Human Resources and Skills Development) to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on March 8, 2005 (Meeting No. 22, 38th Parliament, 1st Session) and the response by the government to question Q-159 (38th Parliament, 1st Session), tabled on September 26, 2005: (a) how many Calls for Proposal (CFPs) were issued by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, resulting in how many projects, since the new process came into force; (b) for each project or contract awarded between July 4, 2005 and October 4, 2005, what was (i) the amount awarded, (ii) the name of the winning organization, (iii) the constituency of the sponsor, (iv) the constituency of activity; and (c) how many more CFPs have been issued and are awaiting approval?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 226—**Mr. David Tilson:**

With regard to the H5N1 bird flu, what steps is the government taking to ensure that this country has an adequate early warning and crisis management system in place, as well as a sufficient supply of vaccine available for Canadians?

(Return tabled)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC), seconded by the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth, moved:

That this House has lost confidence in the government.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it has now become evident to all observers that the government has lost the confidence of the House of Commons and must be removed.

After 17 months in office, the record of the government—or I should say in many instances its lack of record—has become unacceptable to a large majority of the members of the House, representing an overwhelming majority of Canadian voters.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

I want to reflect on the reasons why things have come to this.

[*English*]

In the last election, the Liberal government was narrowly re-elected, with only a minority. In effect, the Canadian people put this government on probation. Why?

Why the limited confidence? Because already in June 2004 the government was seriously tainted by the sponsorship scandal. Ever since Sheila Fraser's devastating report indicating that some \$100

million in taxpayers' money was unaccounted for, the public has been deeply mistrustful of the Liberal record of waste, mismanagement and corruption. Events since then have only confirmed the depth and breadth of the sponsorship corruption. Perhaps more important, they have shown that the Liberal Party has no desire to change, no intention to change and no ability to change.

[*Translation*]

The opposition parties did not begin this Parliament with the hope that it would fail. We have all tried different ways of making it work.

[*English*]

Last fall, all three opposition parties developed consensus amendments to the government's Speech from the Throne rather than just the traditional opposition motion rejecting everything. How did the government respond? It responded by threatening an immediate election.

In February, this party decided that we would support the government's budget based on a number of priorities we shared, including some very modest steps toward tax relief, the Atlantic accords on resource revenue sharing, and the transfer of gas tax revenues to municipalities for infrastructure.

But by April, we believed that the evidence revealed before the Gomery commission left the Liberal Party without the moral authority to govern this country. The testimony before the commission began to confirm a sponsorship program that was a front for massive kickbacks involving organized crime, used by the Liberal Party to fill its own election coffers.

At that point, the New Democratic Party had a serious disagreement with the other two opposition parties. Its preference was to wait to see whether Justice Gomery would confirm the testimony of Jean Brault and others in his report and whether it could find common ground with the government on other issues in the meantime.

[*Translation*]

The government survived in the spring, thanks in part to its deal with the NDP. However, it ensured its survival by resorting to unprecedented anti-democratic tactics, such as cancelling the opposition days and ignoring non-confidence votes.

[*English*]

Also without precedent was what the government did next, which was an unprecedented and hopefully never to be repeated effort to buy off and to attract members from this party and from other parties, even to the point of being prepared to exchange cabinet seats to do it.

In the eyes of the official opposition, this government has lacked the moral authority to govern ever since.

At the same time, we knew that it would be impossible to bring the government down until the NDP also came to the same conclusion. We knew that without a three-party common front, the Liberals would try once again to beg, borrow or steal votes in order to survive.

Supply

The moment of truth finally came with the release of Justice Gomery's report on November 1. This report removed the benefit of any doubt about the depth of corruption within the Liberal Party of Canada.

[Translation]

In his report, Justice Gomery noted:

clear evidence of political involvement in the administration of the Sponsorship Program;—
a complex web of financial transactions—involving kickbacks and illegal contributions to a political party;—
the existence of a “culture of entitlement” among political officials and bureaucrats—

• (1030)

[English]

These statements can no longer be dismissed as media speculation or as partisan attacks. These are the findings of fact by a judge in a judicial inquiry. As Judge Gomery concluded, “The LPCQ...cannot escape responsibility for the misconduct of its officers and representatives”. The Liberal Party itself is part and parcel of this scandal and corruption.

There is no way that a political party that has been named for its involvement in a massive corruption scandal can be entrusted by the House to remain in office. So far, criminal charges have been pursued against relatively small fry in the sponsorship scandal and no one has gone to jail. As long as the guilty party remains in governing the country, as long as it remains in office, nobody will ever be held truly responsible, nobody will ever be firmly punished and no real reforms will ever be made.

Notwithstanding Jean Chrétien's role, the current Prime Minister himself was part of that fateful cabinet meeting of February 1996 that made it a government priority, a taxpayer priority, to strengthen the Liberal Party of Canada in Quebec, which Judge Gomery pointed out was highly inappropriate as, “Cabinet is expected to deal with the interests of the country as a whole, leaving partisan considerations aside”.

As Judge Gomery said, the arrogant attitude of the cabinet to define the interests of the Liberal Party as synonymous with the federation itself “is difficult to reconcile with basic democratic values”. The Prime Minister should have known that. He cannot get away with saying, “Don't blame me. I was only the piano player. I had no idea what was going on upstairs”. As Jean Chrétien said, “He knew what I knew”.

[Translation]

Clearly, this Prime Minister has done nothing about the sponsorship scandal, because the current Prime Minister and his Liberal allies share the same culture of entitlement as Chrétien's Liberal Party.

[English]

Since the Prime Minister came to power, we have seen one Minister of Immigration have to resign over favouritism in giving out visas, while the next one billed taxpayers \$138 for pizza, all defended by the Prime Minister. We have seen Art Eggleton, a man that Jean Chrétien fired from the cabinet for giving an untendered contract to a former girlfriend, get rewarded with a seat in the Senate.

[Translation]

We have seen the PM's good friends, Francis Fox and Dennis Dawson, also compensated for “good and loyal services” by a Senate seat.

[English]

We have seen the unseemly spectacle of a government negotiating severance pay with David Dingwall, the man who hired Chuck Guité to run government advertising, an unregistered lobbyist who received contingency payments that were against government contracting rules, a patronage appointee who quit his job.

We have seen the Prime Minister flying around the country on Challenger jets doing a few hours of government work, then spending the rest of the time campaigning and fundraising, often at exclusive cocktail parties where big Liberal donors pay \$5,000 a ticket to discuss public business. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

The Liberal culture of entitlement goes on. The public must be given a chance to put an end to it.

[Translation]

Unfortunately, and tragically, because this government was so consumed by disinformation and petty politics, so obsessed by its own scandal sheet and its own survival, some things essential for this country fell by the wayside.

• (1035)

[English]

Where the government has acted, it has become increasingly erratic and irresponsible. Take for example the government's budgetary policy. In the first budget in February, the government announced modest surpluses and small tax relief measures. But in May, after the deal with the NDP, the Minister of Finance produced the second budget, claiming that the cupboard was bare and that there would be little or no surplus. He then removed the tax relief.

Two weeks ago, in the third budget in less than nine months, all of a sudden there was an enormous \$97 billion worth of surpluses over the next five years, enough for a \$30 billion package of corporate and personal tax relief. Since that budget two weeks ago, policies have appeared and disappeared at the rate of \$1 billion a day, many of them not in any of the budgets.

At this point nobody can believe a word the government says about economic or fiscal policy or anything else, especially the on again off again policies on income trust, which I will not even get into.

[Translation]

Hon. Stephen Harper (Calgary Southwest, CPC): We are witnessing the same sort of failures on just about every front.

Supply

[*English*]

On criminal justice, we see a government that has lurched from one position to another. For years the Liberals denied Canada had any crime problem. They pushed drug legalization. They said that mandatory minimum sentences did not work. That was only a few weeks ago in the House of Commons. Now, today, they are talking tough on crime in response to 48 shootings on the streets of Toronto.

On trade, the Prime Minister, who came to office promising a more mature relationship with the United States, is now reduced to lecturing the President of the United States for the benefit of the Canadian media because the U.S. administration stopped listening to him a long time ago.

On health care, the Prime Minister promised to fix health care for a generation and considered health care waiting times his top priority in the last election. Now he is content to let the provinces come up with a patchwork scheme of wait time benchmarks and to wait until 2008 before setting targets to reduce wait times. Medical wait times have doubled under the Liberals and the current Prime Minister has only added one more wait time, the time we will have to wait to get action from that do nothing government.

Finally, on the national unity front, the Prime Minister, having missed opportunity after opportunity to work with the most committed federalist premier we have had in the province of Quebec in my lifetime, now wants to sound tough, talking against the new leader of the Parti Québécois, who not only is not the premier of Quebec, he does not even have a seat in the Quebec legislature. He wants to be tough over the Clarity Act, legislation his own Quebec lieutenant does not support.

[*Translation*]

My position on clarity is known, which is in contrast particularly with that of the Prime Minister, who refused to speak of it during the Chrétien years. Quebecers, however, be they federalist or sovereigntist, do not want to debate the rules of the next referendum. What they do want to debate is how to construct a stronger Quebec within a better Canada. They want more than a choice between corruption and separation, which is all this Prime Minister and the Parti Québécois want to offer them.

[*English*]

A party, and I think this is important to repeat when we are talking about the Clarity Act and the rule of law, that has been named in a judicial inquiry, a royal commission, has been found guilty of breaking every conceivable law in the province of Quebec with the help of organized crime cannot lecture the separatists or anyone else about respecting the rule of law.

The Liberals cannot lecture about respecting the rule of law. They cannot move forward, at least in a straight line on reducing taxes, fighting crime, standing up for our trade interests or reducing wait times in health care. The country cannot go on without a change of government. That is why the House has lost confidence in the government.

The Prime Minister will claim that all this is about trying to provoke an unnecessary Christmas election, as if we all would prefer to campaign in the snow. Even now the Prime Minister could choose

to accept the recommendations of the House last Monday and agree to call an election in January for February. The choice to call an election at this time is the Prime Minister's. I acknowledge fully the leader of the New Democratic Party who has given the Prime Minister every conceivable opportunity to do that.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

If the Prime Minister does not want to accept the NDP compromise, the official opposition would be prepared to face the public in a general election. The government will say that such an election is about making Parliament work, or about the economy, or about some ghastly, frightening policies of the opposition parties, but that will be nothing but a smokescreen.

[*English*]

If the Prime Minister chooses to call an election this time, the election will be about the choice that Canadians must make: which party can ensure the change of government needed to restore accountability in Ottawa. It will be a choice between old style politics and sweeping new reforms. It will be a choice between a culture of entitlement and corruption and a culture of accountability and achievement, between benefits for a privileged few and honest government for all citizens. That is the choice we face.

While I have complete confidence in the choice the Canadian people will make, I have no more confidence in the choices the government would make if it serves any more time in office.

[*Translation*]

That is why I move, seconded by the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth:

That this House has lost confidence in the government.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, section 11 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, subsection (d), says that any person charged with an offence or alleged to have committed an offence is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty, according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

My point for the leader of the official opposition is that he knows very well the Gomery inquiry did not have the mandate or the authority to find criminal liability. That report has had findings and those findings have been referred to the RCMP.

The member has made the point that no charges have been laid. He knows very well that at this point, other than referrals to the RCMP made prior to Gomery, those are the only ones for which charges have been laid. Now we have a situation where the RCMP is looking at those charges and it will do its job.

In his speech the member referred to corruption and he ascribed it to the Liberal Party, but did not once ascribe it to the Liberal government. He was very careful to do that. Since Gomery cannot find criminal liability, will the member confirm to the House that he intends to support the charter, the rule of law, the presumption of innocence and the right to due process, which all parties involved in the Gomery commission have not had as yet?

Supply

•(1045)

Hon. Stephen Harper: Madam Speaker, I almost like that question.

The member talks about innocent until proven guilty. However, from the beginning of this scandal, the Prime Minister had no difficulty ascribing guilt or punishing those who just happened to be his enemies within the Liberal Party. We even know now that in the case of Mr. Pelletier he was apparently fired improperly. There is a double standard even within the party.

After Justice Gomery spent all this money and heard all these witnesses, he determined that the Liberal Party played a central role in the sponsorship scandal and that in fact the Liberal Party was the linchpin of the sponsorship scandal. It was the only entity or agent that conceived the program, ran the program and benefited from the program. Is the member seriously suggesting that the people of Canada would wait to remove the government from office only when its leading officials are carted off to jail in handcuffs? Surely we all believe that the people of Canada have higher standards of political accountability than that.

The member tried to make the distinction between the Liberal government and the Liberal Party. If that is a distinction he seriously believes in, and I know the member is an individual of sincere belief on a range of public policy issues, then I would invite him and all members who share that distinction not to campaign in the upcoming federal election under the banner of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would suggest and seek guidance at some future time as to how we could submit the *Hansard* copy of this speech to the Governor General as our submission for the Governor General's prize for literary fiction.

I do not know how the member can attribute blame to the Prime Minister for the problems in sponsorship when Justice Gomery, who was appointed by the Prime Minister, has looked over millions of pages of documentation and the records of two cabinets under two prime ministers, heard experts from across the country, forensic accountants and legal experts, et cetera, and exonerated the Prime Minister. For the simple minds opposite, exonerated means that he was cleared, which means there was no responsibility.

I hear the Conservatives say that there is an out to this election. They say that they have lost confidence but if we wait a week they will have confidence for a week. Perhaps I could get a dictionary to look at the meaning of "hypocrisy". We hear the expressions "culture of very easy", "culture of entitlement" and the leader saying Atlantic Canada is a "culture of defeatism". Canadians will know that they are entitled to a government like we have now that believes in the potential of all regions of the country and of the strength of the country itself, not on multiple capitals like the leader has said that he could live with multiple capitals of this country.

[*Translation*]

There must be one Canada, and one Canada only.

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Harper: Madam Speaker, if the hon. member believes that my speech could get a literary award for fiction, he

must believe that Justice Gomery has written the longest novel in Canadian history. Unfortunately, those are the facts.

I have said to people in my own party and to others that if I belonged to an organization and led an organization that was found to have been involved in a massive corruption ring using organized crime to defraud taxpayers, I cannot understand why anyone found in that position would want to be associated with that organization.

However that is a decision that the Prime Minister has to make and has to explain. I think Canadians understand now. It is a little rich for the Prime Minister who built his political career and reputation on his so-called detailed knowledge of government finance to now say that he did not know what was going on with the finances of the country.

However we can have that debate another time. My point is that the problems we have do not restrict themselves just to the sponsorship scandal. We have seen just in the last week revelations about David Herle, the Liberal campaign manager, getting an untendered government contract, and a Liberal polling firm led by Michael Marzolini, the Liberal pollster, receiving a verbal contract after the Auditor General said that these were inappropriate. It continues.

All we get over there is trying to justify it. Canadians should not justify it. They must defeat the government to make the statement that it is not acceptable.

•(1050)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating my colleague, my leader and my friend for putting these remarks before the House and clearly making the case. I note the great principle in which the Liberals espouse and if we do not like their principles, they have other principles. Their number one priorities continue to mount as we get closer and closer to the election.

I noticed last night that there was a feeling of Christmas in the air. The Christmas trees are now up here on Parliament Hill. Everyone is feeling very buoyant, so much so that we saw a red streak rocketing across the sky. I thought it was old St. Nick himself but it was a red Challenger jet with the Liberal logo "entitlement" on the side and the prime minister St. Nick was dropping bags of money across the country, not toys.

We have outlined and my leader has outlined very clearly the reasons for which the government must go. I would like to give him the opportunity to speak more about the federal accountability act which will be the first priority of a new Conservative government to clean up the unprecedented waste, mismanagement and corruption and the legacy of theft left by the Liberal Party of Canada. That will be the first thing this new government and this new prime minister will address.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The hon. Leader of the Opposition, you have eight seconds in which to answer.

Hon. Stephen Harper: Madam Speaker, in eight seconds we will empower the independent officers of Parliament to hold our government responsible. We will end the revolving door that has gone on here between lobbying firms, senior ministers' offices and the bureaucracy. We also will end the culture of entitlement, big money and lobbying that is at the heart of the Prime Minister's government.

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to refute the motion before the House and to speak directly to Canadians of the record of the achievements of the Liberal government and the future of this great country.

Whether it is in the House, in coffee shops, malls, union halls, hockey rinks or homes across the country, we are prepared to stand before Canadians with a message of opportunity, a message of equality and a message of compassion.

We want to move Canada forward in confidence and strength. We want to continue to build this country, drawing on the best from Canadians so that this country is among the first in the world in economic opportunity for everyone and fairness and justice for everyone and leadership in a troubled world.

This is the course our Prime Minister is setting and this is the course Canadians want for our country. These are the values of economic opportunity and social justice that bring us together. They are what make Canada the choice of people from all over the world. They guide our government in meeting its responsibility to be the guardian of unity, security and sovereignty.

Let me quote from the remarks the Prime Minister made this fall. He said:

I believe in the good that government can do—that government must be the leader of national undertakings that express our highest aspirations and reflect our deepest values.

I believe that the role of government is to set the national objectives of its time, and then to mobilize the national will to achieve them.

Governing with this minority Parliament has brought its own challenges but, through it all, we have remained fixed on building this country and building a better tomorrow for all.

Let us look at what that determination has brought us: a record of eight straight balanced budgets and a financial and economic position that is the envy of other G-8 nations; the lowest interest rates in a generation for Canadians who are buying homes, Canadians who are starting businesses or saving for their own and their children's future; record job creation with the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years; and economic growth, not just in one part of the country but in all regions.

We have heard the speech from the Leader of the Opposition. The actual words that he used are obviously quite negative in tone but that seems to be the opposition's trademark. The opposition calls our determination arrogance. Canadians call it achievement. The opposition calls it an abuse of public funds. Canadians call this securing a prosperous tomorrow for all our people. Canadians call what this government has provided fulfilling a commitment to the aspirations and the hard work of building a better Canada.

Supply

From the very beginning we have been willing to work with the opposition when it is in the best interests of Canadians. For each and every bill that we have passed in the House we have made the effort to build support in the other parties for these priorities. The actual record speaks for itself: budget bills that include the Atlantic accords; the new deal for cities and communities; a national early learning and child care system; bills protecting our children; the civil marriage bill; the health accord; and the veterans charter. These are measures that will make a real difference in the lives of Canadians.

Canada is a parliamentary democracy with core principles that we abide by in this democracy. The alliance of Conservatives, the separatist Bloc and the NDP continue to operate, and we are seeing it again today, not in the public interest but in their own narrow, private and partisan interests by putting forward this motion.

When I look back to the beginning of this Parliament, the Conservatives entered this minority Parliament, even in the earliest days, calling for it not to work. The threats started right from the beginning with the Speech from the Throne back in 2004. The Leader of the Opposition on September 30, 2004, said, "I will give my caucus a mandate to vote. If that means defeating the government, then that is what will happen". He said that at the beginning of this Parliament.

● (1055)

The Leader of the Opposition continues to work on private and partisan ambition and not in the public interest. The leader the official opposition has had that narrow, petty view since the beginning of this Parliament, and it springs from an ideology of extreme right wing conservatism. In fact, Ralph Klein agrees. It is what has animated the former Reform and Canadian Alliance parties, their vision of a small Canada, a Canada that would be at the bidding of the provinces. That is the view that the Conservatives and the separatist Bloc bring together under that vision.

We have seen that alignment before and we are seeing it again as they join hands. They join hands to ensure that the one government that is responsible to all Canadians is weakened to the point that it cannot act on behalf of all Canadians.

The Leader of the Opposition mused that Canada should become more like Belgium. He once stated:

Giving provinces a greater voice has become more important as our courts have become increasingly activist in the era of Charter challenges.

Contrast that with our Prime Minister, who said:

Our linguistic duality and our ethnic and cultural diversity make Canada a global microcosm, open to the world. We understand that the strength and success of each province or region is to be celebrated, for it makes Canada stronger; recognizing that together, united, Canada is much greater than the sum of its parts.

The Conservatives and the Bloc joined forces just two weeks ago to vote against programs that would attract new people to this country. They opposed help for family reunification, and help to settle newcomers to this country. The negativity of the opposition is a constant and consistent feature that we see every day in this House. We see it in the misrepresentations and the half-truths, and the innuendo they use to tear down people. They do not care, and the leader of the official opposition just got up and restated this, what an independent judicial inquiry found to be the truth. They do not even want to have it complete its work.

Supply

Contrast that with the pledge by the Prime Minister that Canadians should have all the results and the response to its findings before a judgment is rendered by Canadians on this Parliament and on all parliamentarians. There is inconsistency in the Conservative position, and we do not have to look very far. It was only in January that the Leader of Opposition said:

Our party expects—and we will settle for nothing less—than the [Martin] government taking every available means to ensure that the Gomery inquiry continues.

What has changed? The opposition parties ignored Justice Gomery's first report which exonerated the Prime Minister and our members from Quebec. The leader of the official opposition was so joyful to quote from Justice Gomery. Justice Gomery was very clear in his report. He stated:

[The Prime Minister], whose role as Finance Minister did not involve him in the supervision of spending by the PMO or PWGSC, is entitled, like other Ministers in the Quebec caucus, to be exonerated from any blame for carelessness or misconduct.

He further wrote:

—a system of government that would impose upon itself a searching inquiry by an independent commissioner, armed...with a far-reaching mandate to investigate and report on matters that could prove to be embarrassing to the Government itself, is proof that our democratic institutions are functioning well and objectively.

However, the findings did not fit with the opposition parties plans and private ambitions. They ignore the fact that the Prime Minister set the inquiry in motion. They ignore the fact that it was the Prime Minister, in his very first act, who cancelled the sponsorship program. They ignore the fact that he fired the people responsible for the program. They ignore the fact that he has ordered lawsuits and recovery of money. They ignore the fact that he turned the report over to the RCMP, that he established an independent Ethics Commissioner, and that he is taking measures to ensure that this never happens again.

• (1100)

The opposition, rather than deal with the truth, would rather deal with misrepresentations, half-truths and innuendoes. Because the Prime Minister acted forcefully, decisively and with integrity, the opposition parties want to end this Parliament.

What are they really saying? They are saying that they disagree with this Parliament in helping the victims of abuse in residential schools. They disagree with helping the men and women who work in the softwood lumber industry. They do not want this Parliament to help older, displaced and disabled workers. They do not want this Parliament to expand apprenticeships and help people obtain the skills to find and keep the jobs. They do not want this Parliament to create a Pacific gateway, which would ensure the future prosperity of British Columbia and the west as the key North American link to the rising economic powers of China and India. They do not want this Parliament to enact new laws to ban street racing, to ease rules for foreign adoptions, to protect the Public Service whistleblowers, and to protect against international trafficking in human beings. That is what they are really saying in putting this motion forward.

Let us contrast what the official opposition is standing for and looking to do with what we want to do in this Parliament. We want this Parliament to work for Canadians. We are continuing to make it work and are focused on their priorities, even as the opposition

parties plot to bring an unwanted election over the holidays. They will have to take responsibility and they will have to explain that to Canadians, but that will be left to them to explain.

We have accomplished much in the 17 months that we have been in this Parliament and with the support of Canadians, we want to do much more. The Prime Minister will be presenting an agenda based on helping people, advancing forward-looking policies, investing in our young people, those most in need, and showing economic and social leadership at home and around the globe.

We are focused on the skills and education Canadians need to prosper and on new partnerships with the private sector to deliver goods the world wants and to reach markets in every place on the planet. We are committed to a strong Canadian federation, to universal health care, and to financial discipline. We are committed to individual freedom and strong social foundations. We are committed to calling forth the best in every citizen and offering hope to every citizen.

For generation after generation, people have come to Canada full of dreams and full of courage to discover new opportunities, to persevere and overcome obstacles, and participate in building this amazing country. They did not ask for miracles. They asked to be treated fairly. They asked to be given their chance to participate. They asked to be treated as equals. All Canadians deserve that promise. All Canadians deserve that chance for their children and their grandchildren to move forward.

It is easy for the opposition parties to belittle progress. It is easy to tear down people with half-truths and innuendoes. It is easy to shut down this Parliament and talk of tearing things apart. When they are so desperate to defeat the government, it is easy for the Conservative leader to say nothing when the leader of the Bloc asserts that sovereignists can ignore the Clarity Act. It is easy to climb into bed with the separatists and months later produce the election the Conservatives so desperately want, to play on fear and insecurities, to foster alienation, and to encourage envy and the regional hurts at the expense of national interests.

It is easy, as they have done over and over again, to blame the person who admits the problems and acts to deal with them. Those things are easy, but those things are not leadership. They do not constitute vision.

• (1105)

We are prepared to meet the challenges of the future. We are prepared to reach out to all Canadians. We believe in the vision and courage of Canadians that will make our economy, our citizens and our country as strong as they can be.

Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, we will work to make the best country in the world even better. The world has seen the meaning of hope and it is Canada. The world has seen the future and it is Canada. We will not let it be turned backward in the name of some right-wing ideology put forward by narrow and angry people. We will not let Canada be torn apart. We believe in thinking and acting in the long term interests of Canadians and this special place, Canada.

Whenever an election is called, we are ready. We are ready to take our vision to Canadians. We are ready to run on our record. We are ready to run on what we have done. We are proud of what we have done. We will fight the negative. We will fight the innuendo and we will go to Canadians. Ultimately, Canadians will decide. That is our democracy and that is their right. We are proud. We are ready. We will fight for Canada and we will ensure Canadians have the brightest future possible.

• (1110)

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadian unity has been imperiled. Unity has been set back 10 years, not by a Canadian scandal of corruption, not by a Quebec scandal of corruption, but by a governing Liberal Party scandal of corruption. Shame on the government. Will the Liberals apologize to Canadians now before the door of the House of Commons closes behind them?

Hon. Tony Valeri: Madam Speaker, Canadian unity is threatened by a Conservative leader who remains silent when the leader of a separatist party suggests that separatists do not need to respect the rule of this country, the rule of law, and that they do not need to respect the Clarity Act.

The Leader of the Opposition was nowhere to be found. He was silent when the unity of this country was being challenged. If there is any challenge to unity, it is because the Conservative Party remains silent and does not work together to build this country. The Leader of the Opposition wants to build firewalls around Alberta. He wants this country to look like Belgium, looking for more capitals in this country.

We believe in a strong central government. We believe in speaking for Canada, for the people of Canada, and we will speak for the people of Canada. We need not take any lessons from the Leader of the Opposition or members of that party who are prepared to isolate regions of this country because they think it is in their own self-interest, their narrow partisan interest.

Hon. David Anderson (Victoria, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rose earlier to question the Leader of the Opposition, but I did not get recognized, so I will question the government House leader instead on the same subject.

We have had a great deal of discussion, quite appropriate discussion, on issues such as accountability and transparency, the possible use of taxpayers' money by political parties, and the actual use in some cases. The Leader of the Opposition failed to mention that the greatest area where we do not have transparency and where we do not have accountability is in the process whereby he became Leader of the Opposition. Nobody knows where the money that was contributed to his leadership campaign came from.

The reason I ask the hon. government House leader this question is that only last Thursday, a week ago today, Mr. Conrad Black, also known as Lord Black of Crossharbour, was indicted by the United States government of diverting some \$51.8 million of United States funds in what is called in the United States by the U.S. government, the Canwest fraud scheme. This gentleman, with his two close associates, David Radler and Peter White, has been extremely prominent in the neo-Conservative media and in the neo-Con-

Supply

servative political movement in this country for the last decade and a half.

I think it is important. We are informed by the American government that this money was stolen from Hollinger International shareholders and the Canadian tax authorities. I would like to know from the hon. government House leader whether he is willing, at the request of the Leader of the Opposition, to have an investigation as to whether any of those moneys, which were allegedly stolen from Canadian taxpayers, wound up in the hands of a Canadian political party or in the leadership campaign of any Canadian political party leader?

• (1115)

Hon. Tony Valeri: Madam Speaker, obviously it is very clear that Canadians know and are aware that the Leader of the Opposition did not in fact disclose the donors to his leadership campaign. I am not sure whether there is something that he might be hiding or not, but that is not for me to answer. That is for the Leader of the Opposition to answer.

The member referred to the official opposition as being somewhat hypocritical. Then again, that is not an uncommon trait displayed by that party over and over again in this House, where it says one thing and does another.

In answer to the hon. member's question, certainly taxpayers would be interested in knowing that the Leader of the Opposition has refused to provide that information. I can only surmise there is something that perhaps he does not want to disclose. Again, that is not for me to answer. That is for the Leader of the Opposition to deal with. I can imagine that he will continue on his course, continue to not disclose, because again, he believes that it is in his own narrow partisan self-interest.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to the speech by the government House leader. I now understand just how far and disconnected the government is from reality and what is actually happening on the main streets across this country. I have a series of questions for the hon. member.

Where was the government when we found out this year that we now have a record number of poor children in this country? There are 1.1 million poor children in this country.

Where was the government when from 1989 through to this year we have seen 60% of Canadian families experience a drop in real income? Why is that? Because of a failed trade policy. We see more and more part time jobs and temporary jobs. Statistics Canada tells us that most jobs do not even come with pensions any more.

Where was the government when we see that for most Canadian families it is harder and harder to make ends meet?

Where was the government when we found that greenhouse gas emissions have risen? Those greenhouse gas emissions have not gone away. There is a worsening environmental crisis and the government has done absolutely nothing about it.

Where was the government when we now see record levels of for profit privatization in health care, which the government has refused to respond to?

Supply

Where was the government with the increasing chaos in the citizenship and immigration system? Decent law-abiding citizens and their families are being rejected by the immigration system that no longer functions because the government has not made the required investments.

Where was the government when it sold out to George Bush on NAFTA? The government refused to stand up for our rights on softwood lumber. There has been no action since August of this year, not one action, aside from a phone call. The government has given away our leverage by selling out Terasen over the backs of British Columbians. Thousands upon thousands said no to that sellout. Terasen is just one of 11,000 companies that have been sold out by the government with its rubber stamp process on foreign investment. We know that 97% of foreign investment comes in to take over Canadian companies and take jobs south.

Where has the government been on all of those files? The Liberals have done absolutely nothing for 12 years and are trying to make up for it in two weeks.

Hon. Tony Valeri: Madam Speaker, I hope you will allow me some time because my list is quite long in responding to the hon. member.

With respect to the first part of the member's question, one only needs to look at the child tax benefit and helping the working poor, which the Minister of Finance had in his economic statement. There is the heating rebate which has been passed through this House.

Let us be clear that in dealing with poverty, the best solution to poverty is a job. We have the lowest unemployment rates in this country in 30 years. We have made investments in affordable housing that are working their way through communities and partnering with municipalities.

With respect to health care, benchmarks have been set. In fact, when we were sitting down with the NDP to work through to protect health care from privatization, that party walked away. The NDP walked away to join hands with the Conservative Party and the separatist Bloc party to do what? To drag Canadians back to the polls during the holiday season.

A half-measure motion was put forward suggesting that we could have the election some time in February. I must say that the opposition did not understand what our democratic principles are and how this democratic institution runs. The opposition parties did not understand it then and they do not understand it now.

I would have to say that while the hon. member and the NDP traditionally do a very good job of ranting and raving at the top of the mountain, when it comes to delivery, they deliver nothing.

• (1120)

Mr. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the remarks of the hon. government House leader, the member for Victoria made an allegation that the hon. Leader of the Opposition had not complied with the election finance law with respect to disclosure of donors.

It is out of order to impugn illegality on the part of a member. That is what the member for Victoria did. It is what the government House leader did. I would ask that you bring those members to order

for having impugned illegality, because the record clearly shows that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is in all respects in full compliance with the election financing law with respect to his leadership campaign.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): In response to the hon. member, I must say that we were all listening very carefully. We will consult the blues. From what we have heard, it seemed that there was no direct reference and connection made, but we will verify this. If it is necessary to do so, we will return.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Madam Speaker, people know that when they elect a New Democratic Party member of Parliament, he or she will work night and day to get results for people. That is what we have done in this Parliament.

An hon. member: Sure. With the separatists.

Hon. Jack Layton: This spring when Liberal corruption and arrogance created a crisis in this Parliament, it was New Democrats who got results by stopping the corporate tax cuts that the Liberals never told anyone about during the election, and invested the money in people in the first NDP budget ever adopted by the House of Commons.

By virtue of the fact of a minority government, Canada was kept out of George Bush's dangerous missile defence plan. Also, the NDP presented ways to get more results for people: a green car strategy for jobs and a cleaner environment; democratic reform through proportional representation; pension protection for workers; a Kyoto plan that works; protecting public health care from creeping Americanization.

[*Translation*]

We came here to work and we have gotten results. We have succeeded despite having a Parliament stained by Liberal corruption and arrogance and despite having a Prime Minister who says one thing and does another.

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Ianno: Take 24.

Hon. Jack Layton: The member for Trinity—Spadina is once again making his customary contribution in the House, which is to heckle meaningless remarks. I will say no more about that at this time.

An hon. member: No class at all.

Hon. Jack Layton: I am sure Madam Speaker will do her best to keep order in this rather chaotic place. I hear a chorus rising from the Liberal benches in support of the member for Trinity—Spadina. They will have their turn to explain themselves to the Canadian public soon enough.

Today, as a result of the Liberals refusing to keep their election rhetoric and protect public health care from Americanization, and as a result of their refusal to listen to a majority vote of the House on a compromise election timing that gets things done in the fall and then moves in an orderly sensible fashion to an election in January, and of course, Justice Gomery's indictment of the Liberal Party culture of entitlement, corruption and arrogance, the New Democratic Party is forced to say that we have no confidence in this government.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

As a result of Liberals refusing to keep their promises to protect public health care, and as a result of the Prime Minister's refusal to compromise and listen to the majority in this House, a democratically elected majority, and as a result of Justice Gomery's very clear indictment of the Liberal Party culture of entitlement and corruption, the New Democratic Party is forced to say that it has no confidence in this government. Enough is enough.

[*English*]

Enough is enough on Liberals saying one thing and doing another. After 12 years of Liberal government, it does not matter what the Liberals say. It matters what they do.

Let us begin with health care. For 12 years the Liberals have said they will protect public health care and yet they have overseen the fastest expansion of American style private for profit health care in this country. There are private clinics, private surgeries, private diagnostics and \$41 billion is being thrown around without a single condition being established to prevent privatization from growing. The New Democratic Party can have no confidence in Liberals protecting public health care. Twelve years say that their words do not match their deeds. Enough is enough.

Let us consider jobs. For 12 years the Liberals have said they will stand up for workers but they have gutted employment insurance so that two out of three Canadians who need help no longer qualify to get that help and end up living in poverty. The Liberals let George Bush attack our forestry workers and the Liberals do not fight back.

They are 12 years late on an auto strategy and have no idea how to build the green cars that Canada wants right here in Canada. Over 140,000 manufacturing jobs have gone during their tenure. The forestry industry is in crisis. Auto plants are closing. Pensions are unprotected. Farm income is at an all-time low. Forty-eight per cent of the children living in poverty in Canada today are part of working families. The myth that workers are properly taken care of and that a job will eliminate poverty is perpetuated even in the House today by the Liberal representatives. New Democrats have no confidence in Liberals protecting the jobs and the industrial base of this country. Twelve years say that their words just do not match their deeds. Enough is enough.

Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Let us turn to the environment. For 12 years Liberals have promised to cut pollution. There were promises of a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2005. Here we are in 2005 and the United Nations has reported that emissions will rise by 24%, have already risen by 24%, rising faster than even in the United States.

Supply

The Liberals oppose mandatory fuel efficiency. They opposed rules to make polluters pollute less. They give billions to oil and coal. The smog season in this country now runs from February to October. New Democrats have no confidence in the Liberals to clean up the environment. Twelve years say their words do not match their deeds. Enough is enough.

When we turn to Canada's role in the world, again for 12 years the Liberals have promised that we would play a role in the world that would make us proud, but they have cut foreign aid and broken our promise to the world. They have ignored Stephen Lewis and not one low cost AIDS bill has gone to Africa yet. They have let the country that invented peacekeeping slip to 33rd in the world. The Prime Minister only said no to George Bush on missile defence because he did not have a majority. New Democrats have no confidence in Liberals playing a role in the world that makes Canada proud. Twelve years say their words do not match their deeds. Enough is enough.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

On the issue of national unity, for 12 years the Liberals have been saying that they would strengthen Canada, but support for sovereignty is at an all-time high. The criminal activities of the Liberal Party in Quebec have insulted Quebecers and the rest of Canada.

[*English*]

The Liberal Party has been the best recruiting tool for the Bloc Québécois. New Democrats have no confidence in a Liberal Party that Justice Gomery says is engaged and has been engaged in an organized kickback scheme in Quebec. We have no confidence in that party to unite people in a common cause from coast to coast. Its record has done the opposite.

New Democrats cannot express confidence in a party whose own corruption has fueled a resurgence of support for Quebec's sovereignty. Enough is enough.

On ethics, for 12 years Liberals have said they will clean up politics, yet cronyism continues. Corporate lobbyists run the show here and do not play by the rules. Justice Gomery found that the Liberal Party was guilty of an organized kickback scheme. The Liberal Party ignores parliamentary votes time and time again and has broken its word on democratic reform.

We cannot express confidence in an arrogant party driven by a culture of entitlement 12 years in the making. People deserve better than their taxes ending up in Liberals' pockets and in those of their friends. Enough is enough.

Supply

It gives the NDP no pleasure to say that we have no confidence in this Liberal government, but after 17 months of trying to achieve results and witnessing the inflexibility, the stubbornness, the arrogance and the corruption, we cannot and will not support this party. Our party will be voting no confidence in the this Liberal government on Monday.

[*Translation*]

We proposed a compromise that would get things done in the fall and provide for an election after the holidays.

[*English*]

The Deputy Prime Minister herself says there is nothing that would be an obstacle to this, but unfortunately the government has not accepted it.

On Monday we cannot vote confidence in the government, because 12 years have passed for which the party needs to be judged on what it has done, not what it says.

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the NDP, which purports to be a party that cares about people, and to at the same time take into account, even just in the last year and a half, many of the programs we have brought forward, programs to help Canadians achieve their potential. For the most vulnerable in our society, we continue to work to try to bring forward programs such as affordable housing, rent supplements, and the RRAP program to allow low income seniors and the disabled to stay in their homes and their communities as long as possible.

Let us take into account the aboriginal issues that we in our party are working hard on, to make them work in a way that will give the aboriginal community its rightful place in our society and in the world. Today there is a great conference taking place. It looks great, but in the end, the opposition party is bringing forward the confidence motion which will not allow us to put in place all the agreements that have come forward.

Let us take into account literacy and the programs we have put in place to help all of our citizens achieve their potential, as well as the labour market retraining program for those who are not able to work today, even though, over these last 12 years, over 3 million more Canadians are working today than there were 10 years ago.

Twenty-five per cent more Canadians are working today than in those days when the unemployment rate was 11.4%, with the party on the opposite side that believes in survival of the fittest. Now, suddenly, the NDP has given up its principles for sheer, simple, crass political points.

Yesterday, the NDP members gave us a vote of confidence. Today, suddenly, they do not, and they are pulling out of the air all of these other reasons. When we were trying to pull together more affordable housing, public transit and all of the other issues in our platform, which we moved up to accommodate the NDP members so they could see that we were real about those issues because we had them in our election platform, they supported us, even though they had the opposite side calling them many names. The member for Toronto—Danforth said “making a deal with the devil”. I think he was referring to the separatists. Now, not only is he going in with the

people talking about making a deal with the devil, they have all gone together.

Canadians will punish the New Democratic Party, because—

• (1135)

Mr. Jay Hill: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party would show a little respect for the leader of the New Democratic Party, ask a question and leave him some time to respond rather than using up all the time.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): That is not a point of order, but I would encourage the member to get to his question.

Hon. Tony Ianno: Madam Speaker, I am getting to my question. The only problem is that when look at child care and at not participating in the Iraq war, compared to who he is supporting—who would have probably done that at the time—I wonder about the member's principles. Tommy Douglas is probably turning over in his grave, looking at cheap political points versus caring for the people of Canada and the principles of sharing, understanding and tolerance that have made this country truly great. I wonder what the hon. member is going to say to Canadians at large when they ask him—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

Hon. Jack Layton: Madam Speaker, first let me speak about the record of the New Democratic Party in this 17 month Parliament. I believe that Canadians will see when they look at the record that it is the New Democratic Party that tried to set things right with an attitude of compromise and hard work, while keeping in mind what Canadians were most concerned about for their families and their country. Let me give some examples.

A parliamentary crisis came about last spring when the first version of the budget presented by the Liberal Party forgot to mention aboriginal communities, forgot to mention affordable housing, which was desperately needed, forgot to address the issue of rising tuition fees, did not make a commitment on foreign aid, had nothing to do with fixing people's homes to burn less fuel and help them save energy, and had nothing to do with protecting workers' wages in the event of bankruptcy.

The New Democrats came forward at that time and said to the Liberal Party that if it would eliminate its corporate tax cuts to its friends and instead invest in these key areas, we would support the budget. That stands as a very important achievement and as the type of thing that New Democrats will do in the House, particularly when we have more members following the next election.

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased, on behalf of my party, to rise in the House today to say that I agree that this government no longer has the confidence of Canadians. This week in the House, the majority of members from all sides voted for a January or February election.

The Prime Minister, who says he wants to reduce the democratic deficit, has done the exact opposite. He has refused to heed the extremely clear directives of the House and the democratic direction expressed. He has decided, despite this, to dig in his heels and force an election campaign during the Christmas holidays. How atrocious. The Prime Minister is ignoring the will of the House, thereby forcing a Christmas election on Canadians.

I would like to quote a few things Justice Gomery said, because this is extremely important. Everyone knows that this government has lost the trust of Canadians and they also know why. For 12 years, this government has been one long scandal. It is obvious to Canadians, with the sponsorship scandal, that this government is corrupt.

Justice Gomery and his commission of inquiry found:

- clear evidence of political involvement in the administration—;
- a veil of secrecy surrounding the administration—;
- reluctance, for fear of reprisal, by virtually all public servants—;
- gross overcharging—;
- deliberate actions to avoid compliance with federal legislation and policies—;

They broke the law. They have not apologized; rather, they continue to break it. I will come back to this later.

I continue to quote:

- a complex web of financial transactions...involving kickbacks and illegal contributions to a political party—;
- certain agencies carrying on their payrolls individuals who were, in effect, working on Liberal Party matters;
- the refusal of ministers...to acknowledge their responsibility for the problems of mismanagement that occurred.

Finally, I come to the most important point:

- the existence of a "culture of entitlement" among political officials—;

These are Justice Gomery's findings, and the Liberal Party and this government will be judged on those findings in the coming weeks.

● (1140)

[*English*]

That is not all. Over the years we have consistently seen this culture of entitlement impregnate every level of the Liberal Party. All we have to do, going beyond the sponsorship scandal, is talk about some of the other scandals of the government: the Somalia inquiry that was shut down; the APEC inquiry; shawinigate; the tainted blood scandal; the HRDC scandal; the employment insurance rip-off; George Radwanski and the consistent process of unlimited expense claims for Liberal appointees, something that has been in existence and that the Liberals have done nothing about.

We have had the Prime Minister's CSL contracts and the fact that the government was 1,000% off in estimating the value of those contracts. We have over \$9 billion going into unaccountable foundations that are beyond the purview of the Auditor General

and the government refuses to allow those funds to be scrutinized by the Auditor General. We have Canada Post and André Ouellet. We have David Dingwall and his entitlements. We have the ambassador in France throwing \$200,000 parties. We had the submarine fiasco. We had the Toronto Port Authority, which I will come back to in a moment.

What we are talking about is systematic corruption. Judge Gomery identified it and clearly said that the culture of entitlement exists within the Liberal Party and that is why Canadians will be judging it in just a few weeks.

The Toronto Port Authority is the latest in the long list of Liberal scandals. Here we have \$35 million that was thrown away for a bridge that was never built. We have had freedom of information requests. We have questioned the minister and we have continued to try to get answers as to what happened to that \$35 million. Where was it paid? Why was it paid? The government stonewalls because it is afraid that Canadians will find out the truth. We will continue to press the government to find out what happened to that money.

It is not just because of what the Liberal government has done that Canadians have lost confidence. It is what the government has not done. Every time Liberal members rise in the House to talk about what a beautiful job they have done, we in this corner hang our heads because we know that the government is so disconnected from the reality that exists on main streets across the country that it does not even realize the size and scope of the economic disaster that Canadian families are facing from coast to coast to coast.

Over 60% of Canadian families are earning, in real terms, less than they were earning 15 years ago. We have seen that most jobs created by the Liberals' policy have been part time or temporary in nature. Most of those jobs no longer have pensions. Most Canadian families are having a harder and harder time of it, struggling more and more to get by, and the government has done nothing for them.

We have over 1.1 million poor kids in the country and the government has done nothing for them. We have seen homelessness triple in many communities across the country, poor families, working families that can no longer afford housing. We know the government did nothing until the New Democratic Party caucus forced it to cut the corporate tax cuts it wanted to bring in and to bring in \$1.6 billion to start addressing the homelessness crisis.

The truth is that the Liberal government does not act unless the NDP forces it to. We have done a lot with 18 or 19 members. I can tell members that in the next House, in the 39th Parliament, we will be doing oh so much more because we will have oh so many more members of Parliament in the NDP caucus forcing members in the other three corners of the House to work on these important issues.

Supply

• (1145)

The government has failed Canadian families. We have seen a failure of dealing with poverty among kids that is growing at record levels. We have seen a failed trade policy, which is another reason Canadians have lost confidence in this government.

In August, George Bush arbitrarily ripped up the dispute settlement mechanism of NAFTA and our government has done absolutely nothing in response. In British Columbia, 20,000 jobs have been lost and 40,000 jobs have been lost across the country. What has the government done, aside from placing a phone call, which obviously took a lot of effort because it took two months to make it? It has continued to negotiate concessions on NAFTA-plus. The NAFTA-plus concessions, as we know, are in over 300 areas, including food safety and air safety. Instead of standing up to the Bush administration, the government just cannot wait to concede more to it. That is another reason Canadians have lost confidence in the government.

Canadians have lost confidence in the government because its environmental policy is a failure. We are in a worse environmental crisis now than before the Liberals came into government. Smog days have expanded, as the member for Toronto—Danforth mentioned. Greenhouse gas emissions have not gone down. They have gone up more than 20%. We have seen increasing for profit privatization in health care, which the government has done nothing about, and a sell-out of Canada without precedence. Even Brian Mulroney was not this bad. Eleven thousand corporations and companies have been sold out by the government by a rubber stamp process.

Canadians will have a choice in a few weeks that is beyond the corrupt Liberals and the foolish Conservatives. Canadians will have a new choice. They will be choosing between the NDP, the Liberals and the Conservatives. However the NDP brings forward the most popular and the most trusted leader in the country. That is the choice facing Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his words. They are confusing though. He says that Canadians will have a choice among several different viewpoints.

I have worked with this member in the House. Together we have sometimes helped major bills to progress, pursuant to certain discussions. Today he spoke in favour of a motion from the official opposition, a party that believes the very opposite of what he believes, of his ideas and ideology. He said that we have not stood up to the Americans enough in trade negotiations. But here he is supporting a party that could be described as the lapdog of the Americans. Some people would say that, and quite rightly.

It is hard to understand why he would support a party that does not believe in a united Canada; a party that would risk the unity of Canada to further individual political careers; a party that would take advantage of situations and ally itself with the separatists—the socialists are now allying themselves with the opportunists—; a party that even says there could be several national capitals.

All the projects that his party promotes are social and community projects that the federal government also promotes. They need a fairly strong central government that assumes its responsibilities. In the area of early childhood, we have made a lot of progress by injecting \$5 billion. Insofar as the child tax credit is concerned, it is this government which brought that forward. The other party across the aisle would turn all these responsibilities over to the provinces and we would have to withdraw, probably leaving us with not much more than defence.

We have seen that some provinces did not want to share their wealth with families in need. These families had to rely on social assistance. That is what happened in my province. But still the NDP members would work together with a party that would keep it at this level. At the same time, they tell us they are going to support the motion because they have lost confidence in the government.

Just last week, though, they introduced a motion that indicated they still had confidence in the government for a few weeks—maybe until an auspicious time came along for them from an electoral standpoint. I do not know whether this is their auspicious moment, but they must think so. It is certainly to the advantage of the Bloc Québécois. In acting as he does, is the member aware of the dangers they are posing to our country?

• (1150)

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I will start by thanking the hon. member for his question, because it is the fundamental question for the coming election.

Is there really a difference between the corrupt Liberal Party and the Conservative Party? None that I can see.

What has the hon. Minister of Finance promised after the election? He has promised two things: tax goodies for this country's big businesses and bank mergers. He has said he will wait for the election before proceeding with those two major priorities of the Liberal government.

The Liberal Party will spend two weeks being a New Democratic Liberal party. For two weeks, it will address some issues it has ignored for 12 years, but basically the principles it believes in are exactly the same as the principles of the Conservative Party. That is why there will be a choice between three parties in the coming election.

The same phenomenon arises when we look at the privatization of health care. The government did nothing to prevent that. The same thing goes for the environment. There are no differences between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party.

Now for a word on national unity. The Liberals lost all credibility when they deeply wounded our national unity. The Liberal Party used national unity, something all Canadians want to strive for, to fill its own pockets. This is absolutely shocking, and the reason the Liberals have no credibility whatsoever when they talk of national unity.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Madam Speaker, the time has finally come.

Supply

For months, we have been watching the sad spectacle of a government up to its neck in the sponsorship scandal, the worst scandal in Canadian political history.

During the Gomery Commission hearings, we learned a great deal about the Liberal Party of Canada led by the Prime Minister. What we learned is that the Liberal Party of Canada broke laws, diverted public funds and tried to buy votes using our own money.

Judge Gomery's report says that the Liberal Party of Canada brought shame upon itself, that it instituted a system of bribes from which it reaped the benefits and that it broke the most fundamental rules of democracy. That is what we know.

It is impossible for this House, in all good conscience, to have confidence in the Liberal government. The motion we are debating today is therefore the result of a common finding by the three opposition parties which, I remind you, make up the majority in the House of Commons. The Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Québécois may disagree on many issues, but we agree that the Liberal Party and its leader have lost the moral authority to govern.

Judge Gomery did not have a mandate to punish those responsible for the sponsorship scandal. That mandate falls to the public. And with this motion, voters will be able to pass judgment and punish the members of the Liberal Party of Canada when they cast their votes.

The Prime Minister, who is the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, vowed that he was going to clean house. He did the exact opposite by perpetuating the Liberal culture of cronyism, patronage and concealment.

He appointed his friends and Liberal Party organizers Dennis Dawson, Francis Fox and Art Eggleton to the Senate. He gave diplomatic postings to Yvon Charbonneau and Mario Laguë. That is cronyism. Despite all his lovely promises to bring in new mechanisms to eliminate what he termed the democratic deficit, the Prime Minister has become the very incarnation of that deficit.

He continues to approve the Liberal Party of Canada appointing Liberals as returning officers; that is patronage. Elections Canada, through Mr. Kingsley, has been asking for years for the same process we have in Quebec, that is, an independent commission that appoints qualified people rather than Liberal supporters to serve as returning officers. The Prime Minister rejected that idea.

He also refused to allow the House to inquire into Option Canada, even though that organization contravened the Quebec Referendum Act and clearly broke federal Treasury Board rules; that is concealment.

Here we have an organization created at the last minute getting \$4.8 million two or three weeks before the 1995 referendum, one week after it was created. Never before did the federal bureaucracy move so fast. What a strange coincidence.

We can see why the Prime Minister is afraid to bring things into the light. Option Canada was run by Claude Dauphin, a man the Prime Minister later hired as a special adviser on Quebec. What a great message for the Prime Minister, defender of rights and the law, to send us in making that appointment.

The Prime Minister also promised that the inquiry would get to the bottom of the sponsorship scandal. However, there is still much we do not know about the sponsorship scandal.

For example, to which Liberal Party candidates did Marc-Yvan Côté, who was himself expelled from the Liberal Party of Canada, distribute tens of thousands of dollars in envelopes which he slid into the pockets of these candidates? We know how that happened: it was Brault to Corriveau, to Béliveau, to Côté. You would think it was a hockey game. And Côté shoots and scores. In this case, we would like to know where Côté was aiming. He told us that 18 ridings had received money, along with 10 candidates. If they do not want to give us the names of the guilty, they should at least give us the names of the innocent.

• (1155)

We would be satisfied with that.

The Liberal Party expelled him, but not those who received the money; it is forbidden to give, but not to receive.

They tell us that they have repaid the \$120,000 in dirty money. They have reimbursed this amount, but those who received it have spent it. But they do not go after them.

And to cap it all, in the last election, they managed to lose \$40,000 in the riding of Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, which does not appear anywhere in the election report. The president of the riding association has said he was disappointed at the Liberals, adding that, after spending 40 years in their service, he was going elsewhere.

This Prime Minister who refuses to answer us thus has his reasons for doing so and for investigating. This Prime Minister has broken all his promises.

By tabling a budget instead of an economic statement last week, the leader of the Liberal Party gave us proof that he had learned nothing from the sponsorship scandal.

This is an election budget, which perpetuates all that is worst in the Liberal culture.

The Liberal government was completely dishonest nature in its estimates.

The Bloc had the same figures last February, and it was right on target. We said it was \$11 billion, the government said it was \$4 billion. They were only 280% out. Just a little mistake. It was the loaves and the fishes, because it offered the same figure, namely \$11 billion, a few days ago.

Just before the election, enormous budget surpluses suddenly appear, as if by magic—it is enough to make Houdini jealous.

These enormous budget surpluses are the absurd proof of the existence of the fiscal imbalance: too much money in Ottawa for its own areas of jurisdiction; not enough in Quebec and in the provinces to address the challenges of health and education.

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Just think about it: Health Canada employs 10,000 public servants in Ottawa, but does not run a single hospital. What is wrong with this picture? These people know everything, however. Ottawa knows best. It is no business of theirs, but they know best. Now they are going a bit further: they do not recognize the existence of this fiscal imbalance. They created it, however, just as this Prime Minister created the tax havens. He has eliminated some; but there is one he has forgotten: Barbados.

Why did he forget Barbados? In 1998 he introduced legislation excluding Barbados from the list of tax havens. One has to wonder, why make this legislation retroactive to 1995? It seems that his company, Canada Steamship Lines, left Liberia to set up shop in Barbados—what an extraordinary coincidence—with ships built in China and—not proud enough of Canada—with flags from other countries, except Canada in most cases.

And this Prime Minister claims to be a person of integrity and honesty.

He goes further by increasingly interfering in Quebec's jurisdictions in the name of national interest, he says. Children are of national interest. He discovered that there are children in child care, so he interferes in child care. There are some in primary schools, so he interferes in primary schools. Just think, there are some in hospital. Then it must be a federal jurisdiction. What is more, there are some living in towns, imagine that! So, he interferes in towns on behalf of children, who are of national interest.

Such is the reasoning of this Prime Minister and, once again, he is trying to buy voters with their own money. It is the sponsorship scandal all over again. However, he is not correcting the injustices he himself created.

I am thinking of last night, and this is as cynical as it gets; for years, together with the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, we have been fighting for low-income seniors to get the guaranteed income supplement. The Liberals told us it was not true, but then they had to admit that it was. Some \$3.2 billion was extorted from the poorest in society. The Liberals have always refused to meet our demands.

Yesterday, during second reading of Bill C-301, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (monthly guaranteed income supplement), surprise, surprise, the Liberals voted in favour of our request. The result of the vote was 259 in favour and 0 against. During the election campaign, they will be able to say that they supported the request and that they are taking care of seniors. We got unanimous consent in the House. When there is unanimity here—we got it four times this week—we move on to third reading.

• (1200)

Then, what everybody agreed on here is immediately put into effect. We figured, “They’re going to agree to third reading. They finally got the idea”. The NDP said, “Yes, let’s proceed”. The Conservatives said, “Yes, let’s proceed”. But Liberal voices rose, saying, “No, no, no. We do not want to proceed”. Essentially, this is utter hypocrisy, and it is reaching new heights.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

An hon. member: It is hypocrisy.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Such is the Liberal culture deeply ingrained in the people across the way. Such is this Liberal culture of laughing at people, particularly the oldest members of society in this instance, who spent their lives contributing to society. When they are owed money, they are ignored. Yet money will be clawed back retroactively from school boards. And the Liberals claim to care about education. What fine thinking. But that is the usual thinking on almost every issue.

We doubt that voters will buy into the Prime Minister's petty blackmail.

We have seen money start pouring out again by the billions in recent days. We have seen the Liberals travel at the taxpayers' expense, flying here and there on Challengers. Suddenly, they are making announcement everywhere in Canada and Quebec. They are campaigning at the expense of the public purse. As usual, they are confusing the interests of the state and the interests of the Liberal Party of Canada, like in the sponsorship file. That is precisely what they are doing. That is scandalous. The Liberal culture gave us the sponsorship scandal, and the same culture is currently at play in this shameful blackmail they are subjecting the public to.

The Prime Minister is afraid of going before the voters, because he knows that the public is not fooled. This Prime Minister said he knew nothing about the sponsorship scandal, that he was not responsible. That is true, we can believe him on that, he is not responsible. Throughout the sponsorship scandal, quite irresponsibly, the Prime Minister was on a constant leadership campaign, having been the second in command in government, finance minister and vice-chair of the Treasury Board.

On page 47 of his report, Justice Gomery wrote that the Treasury Board no longer exercised its program oversight function. In other words, it was an open bar, the Liberals were at the bar and helping themselves freely. That is what happened.

Jean Chrétien tells us, “I regularly asked the Treasury Board whether everything was operating normally in the sponsorship program and they regularly responded that there was no problem whatsoever.” I recall that the current PM was then second in command in the government, vice-chair of the Treasury Board, Minister of Finance, and candidate for party leadership. He knows everybody in the party. The Prime Minister was asked; “Did you receive such an order—that being the word used by Mr. Chrétien—from the then prime minister? Did you reply and did you say there was no problem?” He refused to reply. He did not refuse to reply for no reason. Either he knew and said that nothing was going on, or this Prime Minister simply did not want to know. You know the story of see no evil, hear no evil; that was what went on with the Prime Minister. That is called complicity. That is the term for it.

In closing, I would like to speak to the public. The Prime Minister is trying to slough off his responsibilities and put the blame for a winter election on others. I would like people to know that the blame is his alone. Last year, he took opposition days away from the opposition parties. He fiddled with the parliamentary rules because he knew very well that there would be a motion of non-confidence and he would have lost it. That was his first undemocratic act. Then there was his ingratiating TV appearance, with the statement that he was “sorry that I was not more vigilant”. Indeed, as second in command at the Treasury Board he was not vigilant enough. He said “I will call a general election within 30 days of the publication of the commission’s final report”. Hon. members will recall that the date scheduled for it at that time was December 15. In other words, he had to call the election by January 15 at the latest. He tells us that it is irresponsible to hold a winter election, yet I would remind him—meteorology being under federal jurisdiction—that he ought to know that January 15 falls in the winter.

• (1205)

Perhaps he winters in Barbados? This is a possibility.

In the past, we offered to compromise, saying that if he wanted to do it during the winter, he need only accept the NDP’s proposal. All of a sudden, this was no longer an option for him. This had never happened in the winter, he said. However, in 1979, the Liberals toppled Joe Clark’s government in early December. The election was held on February 20. They see this as a real feather in the Liberal Party’s cap. This ensured the return of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, just before the 1980 referendum. Back then, a winter election was not a problem. However, it is a problem now because they do not want an election.

I can assure you the voters will reach the following conclusion. They will say that getting rid of the Liberals will be their Christmas present to themselves.

There are two sponsorship scandals. The first involves the kickbacks, the Liberal corruption and the Prime Minister saying that he knew nothing or rather that he did not want to know about it. This scandal affects us all because it was our money, taxpayers’ money, that was misappropriated. The second sponsorship scandal is that the Liberal government wanted to circumvent the democratic rules in order to beat the sovereignists, because it has nothing to offer Quebec. That is the second scandal.

The Liberal Party of Canada, under the current Prime Minister, tried to buy Quebecers off. This shows contempt for Quebec. The Gomery commission did not have the mandate to judge both these scandals. I am addressing the voters here because they are the ones with the mandate to judge the corruption, the contempt and the Liberal culture embodied by this party and its members. This issue will be key in the upcoming election. I invite everyone to come out en masse and to deliver the message that corruption and contempt are no longer welcome in Quebec.

• (1210)

[English]

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points on which I would like to obtain clarification. First, on seniors, with the increase of \$433 when fully implemented, it will cost the government \$700

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million a year and will be for perpetuity. That will help 1.6 million seniors across the country who are trying to survive.

Second, we also are dealing with social programs and the guaranteed income supplement, which is non-taxable. This is \$6,000 plus that each senior can apply for every year to ensure they have immediate relief for the year. We continue to work on our social importance of seniors in many ways by our New Horizons programs, our seniors secretariat, and I could continue.

The practice in Canada, with all provincial governments and the federal government, is there is a 12 month period and a retroactivity period of 11 months after the date when seniors notify the government that they have not applied for the guaranteed income supplement. That is the same for all provincial social programs, including the PQ in Quebec. What we have is almost a uniform perspective dealing with the provinces on retroactivity with social programs.

In yesterday’s vote the Liberal Party voted in favour of the motion of the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain. He has been active on this file for quite a while. We felt it was important to let the bill go to committee, so we could look at the process and see what could do to make it work.

Unfortunately, the Bloc made a deal with the Conservatives. On social programs, especially in Quebec, the Conservatives are like a zero. The reason why Quebecers like the Liberal Party is because we care about people and our social programs.

Is there a deal with the Conservative Party, when and if it forms the government, that issues within Quebec will be dealt with in a coalition government by the Bloc Québécois? Then the Conservative government can slash all social programs in the rest of the country and make a deal between the two?

• (1215)

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I was talking about contempt and hypocrisy and that was a good illustration.

Yesterday we voted and the Liberals supported this motion to give seniors full retroactivity of the guaranteed income supplement. In fact, they voted in favour of the motion. Now, they are invoking the fact that the bill did not have time to be reviewed in committee. I will remind them that we passed bills this week that were not reviewed in committee because there was the political will to do so. We did this for veterans.

That was the first thing—

[English]

Hon. Tony Ianno: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The chair, because of the budgetary perspective, ruled the segment on the retroactivity out of order. Basically, it can only go—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister is entering into debate. We will hear the rest of the response from the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to give the same response you gave yesterday. You refused to apply unanimous consent because you said you heard “nays” from the Liberal side. That is what happened. That is the first thing.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: If the hon. member for Ahuntsic would calm down a bit, we could continue our discussion. She can rise later to ask questions and try to be coherent, but until then, it would be preferable for her to stay quiet.

Second, as for retroactivity, when it comes time to claw back money from taxpayers who did not pay enough taxes, the government acts retroactively.

The minister of state gave the example of the birth of a child in Quebec and the 11-month period during which parents can receive family benefits. It is quite easy to notice when a child is born; the mother is quite aware of it. I do not know whether the hon. member realizes that. It is therefore easy for the mother to fill out the forms in hospital.

However, seniors often have a hard time reading and are unaware of some of the existing government programs. It is stated in fine print, like in insurance contracts, that the beneficiaries are entitled to this or that, but seniors do not see that. That is what happens and it is misappropriation of funds on the backs of seniors.

Today, I challenge the Liberals to have the decency not to give out the money they took from seniors. Then at least they will stand up and seem honest, even though they are not.

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Bloc leader for his words. I have a few questions for him.

[*English*]

Before I ask the question, one of the big stories of the last 12 years has been the elimination of the deficit. The government will certainly try to take all the credit for that, but I think that arguably free trade, swelling of government revenues and the implementation of the very difficult but good tax, called the GST, was responsible for that success story.

The real story of the last 12 years though has been one of lost opportunities. We have had surpluses over the last number of years which we have not had in three decades, yet the government has squandered opportunity. National unity is on the slide, and I disagree with my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois on that file. I believe in one country and one strong, united Canada. It has been on a slide as a direct result of the government's mishandling of the Quebec file. Native conditions continue to be abhorrent in the country. The environment and smog issues are ever increasingly difficult in the GTA. Productivity continues to slide.

The story of the last 12 years has been one of lost opportunities. However, the worst story of the last 12 years, and one that should cause concern for all Canadians regardless of their partisan stripe, is the subversion of democracy.

In 1997 the party in power won that election with 155 seats out of 301 seats with a margin—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Chuck Strahl): The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, in view of the Liberals' attitude following the 1995 referendum, I think there are three points in their strategy.

First, they denied the rights of the National Assembly by means of the Clarity Act.

Second, they caused the fiscal imbalance. Mr. Massé, the president of Treasury Board at the time, put it very well: “We are going to ensure that Lucien Bouchard [the Premier of Quebec at the time] does not have the means to pay for social programs and we will swoop in as the great saviours”. That is exactly what they have been doing.

Third, in doing this, they said to themselves that they would try to buy the consciences of Quebecers. The sponsorship program followed, and away things went. At the same time, they were lining the pockets of their friends.

That being said, in regard to what is called national unity, Canadian unity, I will tell you very frankly and with the deepest respect for Canada, which is a great country, and for the Canadian nation, which is a great nation, that the day Quebec becomes a sovereign country, Canadian unity will be all the stronger because this issue will no longer arise. Canada will then be a very united country. This will no longer be a topic of conversation. This issue will not arise.

Canada will finally be a very united country alongside a very united country called Quebec. We will be good friends who work together thanks to what we have in common, rather than squabbling over what divides us.

There is always a way to agree with a neighbour on the care of a shared lawn. But when the neighbour comes and paints the walls of my living room, that is going too far.

• (1220)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the leader of the Bloc Québécois,

I would point out to begin with that I do not need any lectures on morality from him or any of his colleagues.

I have several questions in reserve and I would like him to give me direct and brief answers.

Does the leader of the Bloc Québécois accept the Gomery report or does he doubt Justice Gomery's credibility? In other words, does he accept the entire report or only paragraph 1.4 of chapter I, but not paragraph 16.3 of chapter XVI? Does he accept the report as a whole or only selectively?

As for my second question, it deals with integrity.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt, but the hon. member's time is up.

Supply

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, he does not want any lectures on morality. First of all, he might need an explanation of what morality is. Then perhaps he would understand things better.

Second, we do of course accept the Gomery report, even the part where Mr. Gomery writes that the Prime Minister, and finance minister, was not connected to the administration of the sponsorship program. We were saying so even before the report was released.

We also accept the part on page 47 where Justice Gomery says that the Treasury Board stopped exercising its oversight function over the programs. The Minister of Finance was second in command in this government, and especially Vice-President of the Treasury Board. That we accept.

In addition, Justice Gomery writes that the Liberal Party of Canada has, as an institution, developed a system of corruption. We accept that also.

I am pleased that our friend at last accepts something that is true, at least here in the House. I share his opinion. Justice Gomery writes on page 7 that ministers, senior public servants and executive assistants did not properly supervise the administration of this program. I accept that, perfectly and completely, from beginning to end.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this important historic debate which in no short time at all will result in Canada embarking on an important election.

The motion before the House has been clearly defined. It speaks to the need to remove the government from office for reasons that have been outlined and will be chronicled throughout the day.

Earlier this week a majority of the House of Commons voted in favour of the New Democratic Party's motion which called for an election in early February. The Liberal Party unconditionally rejected it. It is clear that the government refused to compromise, refused a non-confidence motion that at that time would have caused an election to occur after Christmas.

It is also important to note that the original timetable that was set out by the Prime Minister which would have had the second report for Gomery arrive on December 1 would have put the country in the exact same position that we are currently facing.

The government has refused once again, as it has on so many occasions, to accept the democratic will of the House. Therefore, the official opposition has now moved a motion that condemns the arrogance of the government by refusing the will of the House as it has before. It condemns the Liberal government for the culture of entitlement, corruption, scandal, gross abuse of public funds for political purposes, and massive misrepresentation.

So much of this was at one time a priority for the Prime Minister. He spoke of the democratic deficit. He spoke of the need to end the culture of who you know in the PMO. It has now become clear that he in fact has embraced another culture and that is, "How much

money can we blow in the PMO? How much can we access for the sole purposes of buying public support?"

As the words fall from the Prime Minister's mouth, he knows they are untrue when he makes these types of promises. We have seen that from the very beginning when the Prime Minister came to public office with the avowed purpose of defeating free trade, with the avowed promise to axe the tax to get rid of the GST. Then in true form in Janus-faced enthusiasm, he embraced both of those policies, calling them his own and taking credit for them throughout the country. That is not the type of honesty one would expect from the high office of Prime Minister.

To preface my remarks I want to refer of course to Justice Gomery's report, which in very telling words stated:

The Report that follows chronicles a depressing story of multiple failures to plan a government program appropriately and to control waste—a story of greed, venality and misconduct both in government and advertising and communications agencies, all of which contributed to the loss and misuse of huge amounts of money at the expense of Canadian taxpayers. They are outraged and have valid reason for their anger.

These are watchwords for the campaign and will be engraved on the tombstone of the Liberal Party at the conclusion of the campaign.

The Liberal Party now sets these priorities of addressing gun violence, priorities of addressing some of the terrible things that have happened in our country's history, whether it be abuses in residential schools, whether it be historic injustices of those who have suffered at the hands of previous governments, Japanese immigrants, Ukrainians, native people. Yet all of this is happening cynically on the eve of an election rather than accepting the fact that the government has now had over 12 years to address some of these serious concerns on behalf of Canadians. This speaks again to the priorities.

The priorities of the government are now clear. The government devotes all of its energies and its unfettered access to the public purse to perpetuate itself in power by any means possible. This is a government of failures. This is a government that subordinates the interests of the country to the interests of the Liberal Party each and every time that the Liberals approach an election.

This type of governance has to end. We have seen so many examples, such as the gun registry, which is a ghastly and grievous waste of government money, public money, \$2 billion for this program, while we have seen violence increase on the streets of this country. To perpetuate this type of bureaucratic monstrosity is again what I would describe as a simultaneous, face-saving, rear-end covering exercise on the part of the government.

The Liberals once again subvert the interests of Canadians to somehow avoid accountability and responsibility for their misguided policies. They consistently put blind partisanship ahead of people's interests.

● (1225)

Mr. Speaker, I should have noted at the outset that I will be splitting my time with my friend the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River, who has graciously allowed me to precede him in this exercise.

Supply

It was an abuse of the trust of taxpayers everywhere. This program has been highlighted as the worst political scandal in modern history. Justice Gomery has confirmed that millions of dollars, millions, were stolen from the public treasury to the benefit of the Liberal Party.

The Liberals say that they will pay back a paltry \$1.14 million. They have decided that is the amount they owe, overlooking all of the evidence, overlooking the compelling testimony of Liberals themselves under oath who suggested that the money far exceeds that amount. It is like the Minister of Justice himself getting up and suggesting that the Liberal Party has negotiated with the Liberal government that this is the amount they owe and by the way, they find themselves darned good-looking at the same time. It is ridiculous.

Justice Gomery confirmed the existence of a culture of entitlement. Those were his words. They rang very true again when we heard Mr. David Dingwall refer to entitlement to entitlements in justifying a severance package from his old friends and cronies in the PMO. We know this culture of entitlement runs deep in the Liberal Party.

The bureaucrats who were involved in the sponsorship program just a short time ago spoke of this when they testified before the public accounts committee here in the House of Commons. Ironically, that public accounts committee was cut off just before the last election. It was shut down as we were about to hear the testimony of a very key figure in the entire scandal, and that was Jean Brault. Once again there was interference at the highest levels to avoid accountability and responsibility.

For 12 years now the Liberals have been siphoning Canadians' tax dollars, wasting money on things like the gun registry, Challenger jets, the HRDC boondoggle and a myriad of other untenable programs that do not help ordinary Canadians.

The government has rewarded illegal and immoral behaviour. Let us just look at some of the examples of this culture of entitlement.

When the lid started to come off the sponsorship scandal, the government made the minister who was most responsible, most involved, the ambassador to Denmark. Talk about rewarding bad behaviour. What did the Danish ever do to deserve that?

André Ouellet, then the president of Canada Post, was allowed to charge Canadian taxpayers in excess of \$2 million in travel and hospitality expenses without turning in a single receipt, and my colleague from Palliser is still trying to get to the bottom of that. Who can get away with that type of thing?

Then of course the infamous David Dingwall with a salary in excess of \$277,000 billed ordinary Canadians for gum, a newspaper and water. Talk about a culture of entitlement.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs was allowed to bring his chauffeur along on a foreign affairs trip, even though he was not doing any driving over there as far as we know.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration billed the taxpayers for over \$7,000 in restaurant meals during an 11 week period, including an incredible \$130 pizza binge for two, charging it to the Canadian taxpayers.

Of course, I have mentioned Mr. Dingwall, but just weeks after Justice Gomery's scathing report was made public, the Liberal government issued an untendered contract to the Liberal campaign manager, David Herle, for advice on the government's mini budget. Mr. Herle's firm, Veraxis Research and Communications, was given over \$23,000 for this contract without competition to essentially write the Liberal Party's election platform.

This type of approach to governance is an absolute disgrace that has to end. That is what this election will allow Canadians to do. It will allow Canadians to put an end to this type of governance. It is a sad day for Canada when we come to the conclusion that this is what we must do. A national party like the Liberal Party, a historic institution, has broken faith with the people of Canada and has abused the public trust that it was given.

We have a Prime Minister who has brought disgrace and, I would suggest, disrepute to his high office which he now occupies.

It is time to end the culture of corruption. It is time to end the gross misuse of the money of taxpayers and hard-working Canadians. That is what a Conservative Party will do under the leadership of the hon. member for Calgary Southwest. That is what a Conservative Party will do in realigning and recalibrating the priorities of government with those of Canadians.

My constituents in Central Nova and Nova Scotians in general want the same thing as all Canadians in all parts of the country. They want accountable responsible government. They want clear, honest representation, not the arrogance displayed by the government. They want programs that work. They want access to government aid when they need it and when they deserve it, not because they have joined or support any political party.

What is most appalling is that while kickback cash was being channelled through the sponsorship program to the Liberal Party, the Liberals were also simultaneously wasting and mismanaging programs across the country without giving priority to Canadians. This has to end.

• (1230)

Canadians now have an opportunity to flush the government from office and bring about a clean, honest, responsible government that will get on with bringing this country higher, putting priorities straight and getting on with reaching the potential that we know we have in this great nation.

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to participate, along with the member for Central Nova, on the public accounts committee. He will remember that when Mr. Guité appeared he told us about the transition of power and what his role had been under the Conservative government and what his role became under the Liberal government. That is all the investigation that Justice Gomery has done, which I will return to in a moment.

The member will also remember that at the time Mr. Guité told us that when he was working at public works, the minister was a well-respected Nova Scotian, Mr. Elmer MacKay, whom the member knows quite well, and I cast no aspersions on Mr. MacKay or his record in office and I have no reason to.

Supply

He will remember also that at the time Mr. Guité indicated that when the decisions were made, and I think the direction for the program did not come from the Minister of Public Works but from Senator Lowell Murray, who was handling that at the time, there were political staffers appointed to direct the committee and who were part of the decision making along with Mr. Guité. I think the member would do well to remember that.

I wonder should the Conservatives ever form government whether they would investigate that.

This Prime Minister chose not to. He chose to take his responsibilities and have the investigation of Justice Gomery focus on the time when the Liberals took power to the present, and to give all the information of cabinet requested by Mr. Gomery. Justice Gomery came to the conclusion that the current Prime Minister had no involvement and was exonerated, was completely cleared.

Will the member not admit that to the Canadian public, or does he deny Justice Gomery and his conclusions?

•(1235)

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, that is a very convenient and Liberal description of history, a very Janus-faced description of history. I would certainly hope that my colleague opposite from my home province would not try to besmirch my father's name in this House or anywhere else.

What the member has tried to do is somehow draw attention away and distract and deflect what Mr. Justice Gomery did find. He did not exonerate the Prime Minister of anything other than having operated the sponsorship program, of which he was never accused.

What Mr. Justice Gomery said is that as finance minister, as vice-president of the Treasury Board, as a senior Quebec cabinet minister who was involved in a bloodless coup to replace his prime minister throughout the 12 year period that he was in the Liberal government, he was part and parcel of the Liberal Party that brought about a culture of entitlement, that funnelled money back to itself through the sponsorship program, that was involved in illegal activity, that was involved in immoral activity. That is what Mr. Justice Gomery found.

The attempt by the member to somehow focus attention from his own party's failings is like saying that it was John A. Macdonald's fault, that the Liberals could just roll back the clock and pretend that they were not in government for 12 years.

The member is doing the classic bait and switch. Canadians are not going to buy it. They see through this attempt. They want new, clean, honest government.

Hon. David Anderson (Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has quite rightly pointed out that money stolen from the public treasury and paid to the Liberal Party should be paid back. That is exactly what has happened. He has also called for transparency and for accountability in government. That is very appropriate, too. There should be.

Last Thursday United States authorities indicted Mr. Conrad Black of diverting some \$51.8 million U.S. in the CanWest fraud scheme from Hollinger International shareholders and, this is interesting, from the Canadian taxpayers. Given the prominent role

of Mr. Conrad Black and his associates, David Radler and Peter White, in the neo-con movement in this country over the last 15 years, would the deputy leader of the opposition be willing to have a release of the names of donors to the Leader of the Opposition's leadership campaign so that we could determine whether or not any of these moneys, which we only knew might have been stolen last week with this indictment, wound up in the campaign of the Leader of the Opposition?

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, let us again put some facts straight here.

As far as I know, Lord Black, who is in a pile of trouble, has not been and is not a member of our party. He has been out of this country in fact for some time.

As far as any kind of veiled allusion to there being a failure to disclose donors, as far as I know, the leader of the official opposition has been entirely open and has disclosed on a website, as did I, after the leadership contest. Those remarks are of course just the same sad, tired attempt to draw attention away from the misdeeds and the total arrogance and corruption in which his party has been engaged.

I know he is not in good favour with his party right now. I know he will soon be spending more time fly-fishing and doing things for which he has a passion, and I wish him well in that endeavour. However it is important that Canadians understand that this type of corruption, this type of theft and this type of arrogance has to end. It is something that should be investigated by the RCMP and we are hopeful we will finally see some accountability and perhaps there will be some Liberals red-faced, dragged in handcuffs into the public courtroom and forced to face accountability. Canadians deserve to see that.

•(1240)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of today's historic debate I would like to begin by thanking my colleague from Central Nova for graciously sharing his time with me. He has done remarkable work, not only for his constituents of Central Nova but also on behalf of the new Conservative Party as its deputy leader. I want to make note of that.

In the time I have today I would like to dispel a couple of myths and walk the House and the viewing public through a chronology of events of this the 38th Parliament. I cannot say the word that is most appropriate because it is deemed unparliamentary to say the word lie, but let me say it this way. It is being widely reported in the media nowadays that the government is resorting to a lot of whoppers.

It seems like the government House leader adheres to that old adage that if someone says something long enough, loud enough and often enough, there are people who will believe it. We saw that the last time in the campaign of fear that the Liberals ran against the new Conservative Party in the June 2004 election. It was a campaign of fear against a campaign of hope and, unfortunately, and I mean this sincerely, the campaign of fear ultimately won out on voting day. I am really hopeful that this time Canadians will make up their minds not out of fear or from the many blatant, bald-faced whoppers that the Liberals will say about Conservatives to try to frighten voters away from supporting us at the polls whenever the election date is set.

Supply

The first thing I want to dispel is the accusation that somehow the Conservative Party, as Her Majesty's official loyal opposition in this place, has been totally consumed with trying to force an election. That is blatantly false. Mr. Speaker, you know it and I think Canadians who have been paying attention to what has been going on in Parliament over the last 18 months, or however long it has been, would know that as well.

We have tried to make Parliament work right from the very beginning. Let us reflect on the reality. Even before this 38th Parliament began to sit in October of last year, the leader of the official opposition, the MP for Calgary Southwest, got together with the other two opposition leaders and said that in order to make Parliament work better we should have a meeting to see what we can do.

They came up with a number of changes to the Standing Orders. People who have followed this particular Parliament would know that. They made the change to have a vote on ratification of international treaties. They thought it was pretty important that rather than just having the cabinet decide that, it should come to the chamber for ratification.

They wanted to ensure a greater level of accountability. Accountability is a word we will be hearing so much of over the coming weeks and months. All leaders wanted to ensure for themselves, as well as the Prime Minister, that they would be held accountable with questions and comments in this chamber because, up until they made that change, that had not happened.

They wanted to strike two new standing committees of Parliament, one to address women's issues and the other access to information, privacy and ethics. Ethics is another word that we will be hearing a lot of over the next number of weeks and months as well.

As we very well know, one other change they agreed upon and subsequently made to Parliament was to ensure that the Deputy Speaker's role and the other two acting Speakers were brought forward by the elected Speaker of this chamber rather than the Prime Minister. I think that was a very positive change that was brought forward.

When the throne speech was made on October 4 of last year, it was our leader, the Conservative leader, the member for Calgary Southwest, because it looked like Parliament might fall that quickly with a vote on the throne speech, got together with the opposition leaders, ultimately with the Prime Minister, and brought forward amendments to the throne speech, something that was unheard of.

• (1245)

They wanted to ensure that the employment insurance fund could be used only for the benefit of workers instead of for balancing the federal budget. What a concept. They wanted to ensure the government had to tell the truth in budget forecasting. There is a novel idea that the Liberals have trouble with. They wanted to ensure that the subject of the ballistic missile defence program came to a vote in the House of Commons. Those are just three of the five amendments they brought forward.

What happened to those amendments? If we reflect back on them, virtually nothing happened to them and yet the Liberal government proclaims that somehow it is trying to make Parliament work, not us.

That leads me to another issue, which is opposition days. For the people who are watching, opposition days are very important for accountability, for holding a government to account. They are the days that are set aside in the parliamentary calendar for opposition parties to bring issues of importance to their constituents, to the 63% of Canadians who did not vote Liberal in the last election, to bring those issues to the floor of the House of Commons. What did the government and its House leader do? They cancelled them in April of this year. When the government knew it might face a confidence vote it cancelled the opposition days and postponed them until June so it could know that the opposition was unlikely to force an election in June because we would have a mid-summer vote.

The government did the same thing this fall. The House started sitting on September 26. We had our first opposition day just last week. All those days went by. Why? The government was afraid. It now has the audacity to suggest that the coming election that will straddle the Christmas season is somehow our fault.

The reality is that if we would have had our way we would have had the election last spring, as the House well knows. We certainly would have had it this fall when the weather was nice. No problem.

We have believed since April of last year, when the revelations from the Gomery inquiry became so damning, that the government does not deserve to be in office. However this whole nonsense that we are somehow consumed with only desiring an election is absolutely not credible.

The record will show that of the somewhere in the neighbourhood of 80 bills introduced with the flurry of activity we saw last week, we have either supported or taken a position to support 60% of them, which is 48 of the 80. We, the official opposition, have been acting responsibly on the part of Canadians.

Let us look at the government record. Including today, although I doubt the government will support the motion today, but of the 24 opposition supply day motions the government has supported exactly three, which is 12%. Even of the ones that passed without the support of the Liberals, virtually nothing has happened. This is how the government says that it is in support of democracy.

I heard the government House leader say during his remarks earlier today that somehow his government was the bastion of democracy. It is absolutely ridiculous. The reality is that this is the most undemocratic Parliament in our nation's history, the way these members have performed.

Supply

One of the opposition motions that was passed over the last year was to ensure all victims of hepatitis C received compensation. The second motion passed was to ensure that farmers were adequately compensated. This is important, not only to the people of Prince George—Peace River, who I am always privileged to represent here, but to farmers and farm families who are struggling under an income crisis from coast to coast, whether they are corn producers, beef producers or whatever. I want to remind everyone that we wanted to have a take note debate on the issue. We negotiated that with the House leaders and the government said that as long as the minister was available we could have it on Tuesday night. That was two nights ago on November 22 but somehow the minister was not available. Therefore the Liberals scratched the idea of having a take note debate, as if a debate on something that important hinges upon the need to have the minister in the chamber. What a joke.

However the Liberals try to pretend somehow that they have defended democracy when everyone who has watched what has unfolded over the last year knows exactly the opposite.

• (1250)

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the House leader of the official opposition the opportunity when he rises again to perhaps correct the statement by the member for Central Nova, who indicated that the leader of their party had disclosed his contributions. My understanding is that the contributions to his leadership race in 2002, when he was heading up the national tax coalition, have not been put forward and have not been made available to Canadians. I am sure that in the spirit of openness and democracy he would want to do that. Perhaps he would be able to correct this.

The member mentioned all the measures that were supported. One that the opposition did not support, of course, was a tax measure which involved reducing taxes for the vast majority of Canadians, especially low and middle income earners, the people who need it the most.

He also mentioned in his speech the percentage of bills brought forward by the opposition and which government members found favour with, indicating that it was around 12%. I have never done the calculation, but I am certainly hopeful that in the next Parliament they bring better bills forward so we could support a larger majority of them.

The motion that has been put forward is a motion of non-confidence, but those members could have voted non-confidence on many measures put forward by the government. They did not. They supported them, with the NDP putting off their confidence motion.

Would the member not admit that his leader may be afraid of the serpent in the orchard that might crawl out and get him? Maybe he is afraid of being smitten by the lord of New Brunswick and being challenged for his position and finds it better to go to the polls now rather than waiting until a later date.

Mr. Jay Hill: First, Mr. Speaker, I will comment on this whole business that the Liberals have been trying desperately to raise today.

I do not take any pride whatsoever in making this following statement, but I alluded to it at the beginning of my remarks. I want

to serve notice here and now to the Canadian people that if they think the last election campaign of May and June 2004 was a dirty campaign filled with Liberal attack ads that were totally untrue, they have not seen anything yet. We are seeing it start today in this chamber.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Is that a threat from you, Jay?

Mr. Jay Hill: No, it is a promise, because I know how the Liberals operate. It is not a threat. I can promise Canadian voters this. Right now I can make this prophesy: the Liberals will be running a campaign of fear. They have been doing it already for the last two weeks after they found out the jig was up. They have been caught on it. They have been caught by the fact that the Minister of Public Works has already had to apologize. One would think they would have learned something from that, but they have not, just as they have not learned anything from ad scam.

I did not get a chance to say this in my remarks. I could speak for hours about the reality of the Liberal government and how it is filled with patronage appointments, whether it is Dingwall or Ouellet. It just flabbergasts me and I know it upsets Canadians.

Canadians are going to get their chance to give their judgment on what will be judgment day for the Liberal government when they get to decide who has the best tax relief program and who has a vision for the future of this country. It sure will not be that government or that party of corruption and a culture of entitlement.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development (Internationally Trained Workers Initiative), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to that political party talk about the whole idea of a lack of confidence in this government as seen in the motion brought forward by that party. Those members have been lecturing us about fiscal prudence. We do not need lectures from the official opposition on fiscal prudence. We remember the \$42 billion hole we were in.

Since this government has been dealing with issues such as that one, we have had balanced budgets for nine years. We are paying down the debt. We have money to invest in social and economic infrastructure and in productivity. We have shown fiscal prudence over the last nine years, not just in a glitch that happened for a year. It is fiscal prudence that has gone on for nine years

We have the ability now to put forward bills in the House. As I am from British Columbia, I want to say that by denying us the ability to finish the work of the House in the three months that we have left, according to the Prime Minister's promise, we will not pass the Pacific gateway act, which is extremely important for British Columbians—

• (1255)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River.

Supply

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, this member seems to lack a little credibility, certainly in one of the cities that I am pleased to represent. I have never heard her apologize for the time earlier in her political career when she talked about crosses burning in Prince George. I can tell her how upset my constituents and the residents of Prince George were about that type of racist nonsense from this member.

Let me talk about this: "Liberals rush to spend loot". This is the headline in today's *Ottawa Sun* newspaper. The jig is up for them over there. The member talks about fiscal prudence. If the Liberals had ever hoped to run on the fiscal record of this Prime Minister, they have blown it. Some \$26 billion has been promised in the last three weeks, \$10 billion in the last week. Canadians understand what is going on here. The Liberals could not budget themselves out of a wet paper bag.

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

It is with pride that I rise in the House today to talk about our government and its record and to explain to Canadians why they should have confidence in this government. The people of Canada exercised their democratic choice in June 2004 when they elected a Liberal government, albeit a minority government. We have respected that democratic choice and have tried to make this Parliament work in the best interests of Canadians.

It is with regret that today I have to say plainly to Canadians that while we have tried to make this Parliament work, as Canadians expected and deserved, the opposition parties have been focused over these past months in designing ploys to defeat us and send the people back to the polls.

It is only today that the opposition parties have had the honesty to put a clear motion of non-confidence before this House. For us, the government of this great country, we will stand proudly in our places and vote no to this opportunistic motion.

[*Translation*]

If the leaders of the opposition parties decide to withdraw their confidence in the government now, they are entitled to do so. They will have to explain why they are forcing an election at a time when Canadians least want one. They will have to tell them why they are ending this Parliament, a mere eight weeks ahead of schedule.

[*English*]

The motion means that the opposition no longer wants Parliament to work for Canadians. For weeks, those members have focused on one thing only, election timing. For months, the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the Bloc Québécois have been obsessed with the defeat of this government and sending Canadians back to the polls.

Interestingly, at one point the New Democratic leader offered the leader of the official opposition some sound advice. He said of that leader:

He should start working and talking about the issues that matter to people in their daily lives instead of talking always about an election and who's going to call it.

What a difference a day makes. There they sit, the united alternative: one party that thinks government can do everything, another party that thinks government can do nothing, and a party that wants to break up our country. Talk about the grinch who stole Christmas.

The Prime Minister committed to call an election 30 days after the second Gomery report. At that time, Canadians would have all the facts and a clear outline of recommended changes to make sure certain things never happened again.

This government welcomes the opportunity to talk about accountability and transparency. This Prime Minister cancelled the sponsorship program. This Prime Minister established the Gomery inquiry. This Prime Minister was found to have discharged his duties as finance minister ethically and appropriately. Most important, this Prime Minister made a commitment to the people of Canada and the people of Canada accepted that commitment.

It is quite telling that today's motion is silent on the government's policy agenda. Canadians elected our government to implement the priorities we outlined in the last election, priorities outlined in the Speech from the Throne in September 2004, in our budget in February 2005 and in our economic update earlier this month. The opposition simply repeats its partisan attacks, showing again, with laser-like clarity, that those members have failed to present any positive alternatives to Canadians.

By contrast, as the House leader mentioned this morning, the Prime Minister has set out his vision of what a government must be:

I believe in the good that government can do, that government must be the leader of national undertakings that express our highest aspirations and reflect our deepest values. I believe that the role of government is to set the national objectives of its time and then to mobilize the national will to achieve them.

In this minority government, we have worked to realize our goals. The government has introduced 89 bills, 40 of which have received royal assent, and these bills have made a difference in the lives of Canadians, for example, the veterans charter and the Atlantic accord, to name only two.

I am proud of this government's accomplishments in ensuring economic prosperity for Canadians. Canada has had eight balanced budgets in a row. We are the only G-7 country not in deficit. Unemployment is at a 30 year low. This is simply the best fiscal record of any government since Confederation.

In 2000, we implemented the largest tax cut in Canadian history and \$100 billion was returned to taxpayers. Yesterday, the House of Commons again expressed its confidence in our government, endorsing a variety of tax reductions. We put forward legislation to split unanticipated surpluses in a balanced way among investments, tax reduction and debt relief. Last week, the Minister of Finance announced significant investments in Canada's future prosperity to create opportunities for all Canadians, to advance an innovative economy and to place Canada at the centre of global commerce.

For the opposition to call this a record a gross abuse of public funds is simply a gross distortion.

Canadians told us in the last election that sustaining and building a public health care system was their number one priority. In September 2004, the Prime Minister concluded a successful first ministers meeting by agreeing to a 10 year plan to strengthen health care. We have provided \$40 billion of new health care funding over the next 10 years so that waiting times can be reduced in all the provinces.

We committed in the last election to a system of early learning and child care, perhaps the single best investment we could make in young Canadians. Budget 2005 set aside \$5 billion over the next five years to implement a national system based on equality, universality, accessibility and development. So far, nine provinces have signed agreements. So far, the Conservatives are still opposed.

• (1300)

The government fulfilled its commitment to a historic new deal for Canada's cities and communities, pledging in budget 2005 to share \$5 billion in gas tax revenue over the next five years. These funds will enhance the quality of life in communities across our country. For instance, in Alberta, cities and communities, the fastest growing in Canada, are providing for sustainable investments in infrastructure and mass transit.

The government brought forward a new international policy statement to give Canada a role of pride and influence in the world. We pledged \$12.8 billion toward the Canadian military and committed to increase the regular force by 5,000 and the reserves by 3,000. My colleague, the Minister of National Defence, announced this week the acquisition of a new fleet of transport aircraft. We on this side of the House are proud of our Canadian armed forces and the role they play here and around the world.

As an Albertan, let me say how proud I am of our accomplishments. We have worked with aboriginal communities and the private sector and with the government of the Northwest Territories to help move the Mackenzie gas project forward. This will mean thousands of jobs and new opportunities for the north and our whole country. We worked to reopen the U.S. border to Canadian cattle and to provide assistance for beef producers hit by BSE. Investments and innovation are helping make the universities of Alberta and Calgary true world leaders in health sciences, nanotechnology and energy research, to name but three. The government's vision for the Pacific gateway will see expanded opportunity for Alberta exporters.

At the last election Canadians gave us a mandate to govern. Opposition members will have to answer to Canadians for why they forced an election before Parliament could complete its work. It is a selfish vision of the democratic process to want and to force an election simply because they lost last one.

I wish to conclude by asking this. What kind of Prime Minister would the leader of the official opposition make, a man who says that he thinks it is wrong to remind the separatists they cannot tear up our country by breaking the law, who will not defend the importance of the Clarity Act and even criticizes its mention by our Prime Minister? Perhaps he is thinking about a future where he will need the parliamentary support of a separatist Bloc Québécois. For our part, we are thinking of a higher obligation, to keep the nation united and strong.

Supply

If we are defeated in the House, the government will campaign not only on its record of accomplishment for Canadians but on our vision for the future of our great country. While the opposition will practise the politics of grievance and petty jealousies, we will continue to talk to Canadians about the positive, activist, future oriented plans that we have for our families, our communities and our country.

As the Prime Minister said, and I repeat, "government should set great national objectives and mobilize national will to achieve them". We pledge nothing less to the Canadian people.

• (1305)

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Gomery report basically said that the Prime Minister did not know about the sponsorship scandal. He might have been careless but he did not know.

I read something the other day. It was the sentencing of one of the senior managers of WorldCom. He had been found guilty of the fraud involved with WorldCom. His lawyers were arguing before the judge that he was out of the loop. I guess he was the piano player in the operation. He did not know what was going on. The judge said to the individual that not knowing was not an excuse, that he should have known and he proceeded to sentence Mr. Ebbers to 25 years. That was the judge's pronouncement.

I heard some member refer to Conrad Black and the U.S. I guess I can use the Bernie Ebbers case in the U.S. as an example. My question for the minister of public security is this. Does not knowing what was going on and being out of the loop exonerate the chief financial officer—

The Deputy Speaker: The Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Justice Gomery was very clear. He said that the Prime Minister, then minister of finance, discharged his obligations ethically and appropriately.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in response to the minister's remarks, I would say that we must not confuse the issue. This non-confidence motion has nothing to do with Quebec's sovereignty, but rather the fact that Quebecers and Canadians can no longer tolerate a corrupt government.

In my riding and my region, we learned—confirmed by the Gomery report—that a chief organizer of the Liberal Party of Canada distributed unreported cash in 18 ridings. He gave secret envelopes to 10 candidates in the region.

In our democratic system, can we tolerate a government that does things like that? Is this not reason enough to hold an election as soon as possible and give the House of Commons the cleaning it needs?

*Supply**[English]*

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, let me make it plain to the hon. member that it was the Prime Minister who moved immediately to deal with the situation surrounding the sponsorship situation. It was the Prime Minister who instructed that the Liberal Party of Canada would write a cheque immediately upon receipt of the Gomery report for the amount identified by Mr. Gomery as being wrongfully used and received by the Liberal Party of Canada in Quebec. It was the Prime Minister who banned members from our party. It is the Prime Minister who has put in place a new code of ethics for all of us who are members of the Liberal Party of Canada. It was the Prime Minister who put the Gomery inquiry in place. It was the Prime Minister who introduced whistleblower legislation. It is the Prime Minister who is truly committed to accountability and transparency in government.

• (1310)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not really know where to start on some of the outrageous statements the Deputy Prime Minister of the country has made.

I would like to bring a couple of things to her attention. She has said that there has been no positive contribution by the official opposition to policy in our country. What about our apprenticeship and training program that was brought out a couple of weeks ago? What about the environmental tax credit for people who use transit passes? What about the whole accountability act that our leader has indicated will be the first piece of legislation to be tabled in the House to clean up the mess that the government has created?

However, I want to address the minister about the issue of separatism in the country. The separatists were at record lows of support before the Gomery inquiry started. Now they are at record highs. Who is to blame for that? It is the Liberal Party of Canada. Western alienation is as high as it has ever been and that sits squarely on the government's shoulders. I would like to hear her response.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot of words but, this government has taken action. I thank him for the promises, but we have actually acted. We have put dollars into skills training and apprenticeship. We have put dollars into cities, communities and public transit. We have put dollars into ensuring our young people have access to post-secondary institutions. Please, spare me the empty rhetoric. This government has taken action.

[Translation]

Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to discuss this motion calling for an election. The motion strikes me as a bit ridiculous and somewhat premature. It says that confidence in the government has been lost.

Members will recall that the Prime Minister assured the people of Canada that an election would be called within 30 days following Judge Gomery's final report. I think that is perfectly reasonable and so do the people in my constituency. Polls show that this is very reasonable and that it was a responsible thing for the Prime Minister to say. Canadians want that second report and want this comprehensive review of a dark period in Canadian history to be wrapped up. I have trouble with the fact that this happened. It is very

unfortunate that people have taken advantage of a situation in this country for their own gain.

I am delighted with the reaction from the Prime Minister and his predecessor. The government turned to agencies that specialize in these matters. It created the Gomery commission, which conducted an extraordinary review. First of all, the commission fully exonerated the Prime Minister and the ministers from Quebec and said that there were no connections. That is very important to me and to all Canadians.

We are left with this question of non-confidence. No one can say any more that that is the reason the government lost moral authority, as was said previously. Now, the New Democrats are saying that it is because of what we did not do. The Conservatives—we know they are opportunists—are going to join forces with the separatists. The separatists see every possible condition that would advance their cause, such as decentralization of the federal government. That plays right into the hands of the separatists.

This is a big risk for us. In the Atlantic region, it is certainly not the way people would like to move our country forward. In a way, I can understand these people losing confidence in the government because they do not see the full picture. They cannot grasp a government that loves this country, that understands this country's potential, how it can move it forward, help it, work with communities and regions. The government can see the positive side and the potential for investment. People say when it comes to the money invested in communities that it is not a good thing and that we should not be doing that. We should just transfer the money to the provinces. We should cut all taxes. Meanwhile, every time they stand up to propose something, it involves huge outlays of cash. All of these bills that they say we would not support called for money to be spent. I do not recall many times that that was not the case.

So this is more or less the situation we have. During the week's recess for Remembrance Day, I followed with interest, as did many Canadians no doubt, the schoolyard games that were going on between the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the New Democratic Party. They were saying; "I'll do it if you will; I won't if you don't." It was an edifying spectacle.

Finally the Leader of the Opposition got the upper hand and the leader of the New Democratic Party gave in. We saw the Leader of the Bloc Québécois licking his lips because he could see the potential for creating an impossible situation for federalism in Canada, a perfect situation for encouraging separatism. We know that the Leader of the Bloc Québécois sees himself to some extent like the next governor general of Quebec. He would work with the support of Emperor Boisclair. Everything would be just fine in that country, everything would be different. I remember the debates we had in the House of Commons when they said independence was an absolute necessity for them because there was an incredible federal deficit. It was not working, the country was going broke and there was no chance of moving forward. Now, they say that the surplus is too big, that things are going too well and that there is a fiscal imbalance.

As a Nova Scotian, I benefit greatly from federalism. We take the wealth from all over the country and invest it where there are opportunities to ensure that all the citizens of this country can have access to the same quality of government services. It seems to me that this is eminently reasonable. There are occasional ups and downs. For Alberta, things are very good right now. However, times were considerably less rosy fifty years ago. At that time, they benefited from the investments that Canada made to work with the oil industry and to develop those areas. That was important for Alberta and it is important for Canada. I think there is always a way to work together in this country. The opposition, however, maintains that it has no confidence.

In my view, this is opportunism pure and simple. This is a leader who finds himself in danger and whose one and only chance of hanging on to his position is to go to the polls now. This is how people react. He will go ahead.

• (1315)

[English]

I was reminded, while watching the Conservative Party leader and the leader of the NDP, of two jugglers on a high wire, each with three balls. They would see who would juggle first, knowing full well that if one did, they would both fall off the wire. I believe that is the situation we probably have now. The voters will decide. I do not fear voters. We will go to the polls on our record.

We will do more than that, though. We will go on our promises. We will tell the electors, as we do in every campaign, how we see our federation, what we see as the potential for this country, and how we intend to achieve this potential. We will differentiate ourselves from those who say there should not be a strong federal government and that the provinces are the answer to everything.

We in Nova Scotia really appreciate the cooperation we have with our province, but we also realize that there is a role for the federal government. We saw it in the child tax benefit, the day care program, and in the transfer of money for offshore oil. We see it now in such things as the gas tax that has been transferred to the municipalities.

I had the pleasure of going on a brand new Kings Transit wheelchair accessible bus in Annapolis. It is a piece of equipment that was purchased for over \$200,000 for a rural transit network. People in wheelchairs and the elderly can access this service. The federal government contributes to this program with the imagination and initiatives of local government. I believe that is a great role for the federal government and we should continue that type of partnership.

This week I too am guilty, if that is how I am charged by the opposition, of making a lot of announcements. However, I am proud to do make announcements about investments by ACOA in my community. I want to do it quickly. One never knows what could happen. We could lose power or we could see the disappearance of an agency like ACOA. We know it would be one of the first things the opposition would do.

I was watching the debate at the opposition convention that took place and when that was put on the floor, it was drawn back when

Supply

the member from New Brunswick said that this was very touchy in the Atlantic provinces and that they should not discuss it at this time. I know that this time does not last forever. There is always a danger for those types of activities that are very good for the regions.

I believe there is potential in all regions and I would expand that network, as we did. There was a \$780 million reinvestment in the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency because the government knows the regions show promise. The best way to work with the regions is to give them the resources, so they can reap the benefits of their own strengths.

We come again to the question of confidence in the government and, I am sure, the Prime Minister. I had the opportunity to serve with the Prime Minister in the past cabinet in the last term of the Chrétien government. When I look back at what we achieved, I am very proud. There was the elimination of the deficit, \$42 billion. Remember the number I will use later if time permits of a \$42 billion investment in health care, a complete reversal. We eliminated the deficit and started reducing the debt. We currently enjoy a record balance of trade.

We have problems in trade. BSE and softwood lumber are two glaring examples, but how did we deal with them? It was always hand in hand with the stakeholders in the provinces. On BSE, which was very difficult, we said we would use the scientific approach. We worked with the Americans and always with our stakeholders in the provinces. We came up with the resources to help sustain them through that very difficult time. Times are getting better.

On the question of softwood lumber, we did exactly the same thing. As one who has spoken to business people in the lumber industry from the east, the west and central Canada, I can say that it is very difficult to find unanimity because the situation is different everywhere, but never did the government abandon the rights of Canadians. It always stuck by Canadians. It always stuck by NAFTA and requested that the Americans follow the rules of the NAFTA.

I have full confidence. Sometimes the words "moral authority" are used. I would go further. I would say that it is the moral responsibility of our Prime Minister to continue his good work and represent all regions of the country to have one strong Canada.

Supply

•(1320)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could comment on how we have been governing since we were elected. I gave a 10 minute speech on our accomplishments over the past year. It has been the most successful first year of a government in history. We have done a number of things for seniors, research and development, training, scholarships, the forest industry, fisheries, new strategies for the north, and one of the world's leading environmental plans. I wonder if the member could comment on those successes.

Hon. Robert Thibault: Mr. Speaker, it is true that we have been very successful. It is not always easy to govern in a minority government, but it can work if parties want it to work.

The government took its responsibilities seriously. It is the responsibility of a minority government to advance all bills that it thinks are to the betterment of the nation and seek support where it can find it among the opposition parties. Unfortunately, right now we have a situation that is a little bit abnormal where the opposition parties have created an alliance to propose non-confidence in the government, not based on any initiatives of government.

Traditionally, an initiative of government is put forward. If it has financial implications, then it is a confidence vote and the government can be voted down on it.

Advances were being made in the budgetary go forward plan of the Minister of Finance. At the beginning of my first mandate I met with people in the agricultural industry who were having a lot of trouble getting people to work in peak periods of the season. I encouraged the Minister of Human Resources at the time to find ways within the tax structure to bring people who were unemployed, people who were on family benefits or community service, and people who were on the Canada pension plan, who might be able to work part of the year, even though they could not work year round. We found ways within our tax structure to encourage them and give them a real opportunity, a hand up, so that they could integrate into the workforce to the maximum, improve the quality of life for themselves and their families, and contribute to their communities. I was very pleased to hear that the Minister of Finance is investing billions of dollars in that initiative.

It is possible to work within a minority government, but it needs the will of all parties and, unfortunately, the other parties do not wish to make it work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is like listening to the members of a mutual admiration society.

I would like to ask the member who just spoke a question about the democratic deficit. He obviously sung its praises and described it in the most glowing terms. But I would like to hear him speak about the democratic deficit in light of the following.

It is this government that undemocratically deprived the House of opposition days and postponed them so that they would become less and less relevant. It is also this government that utterly refuses to recognize a motion passed by a majority of the House this week, that

is to say, a decision made democratically by all the legally elected representatives of the people of Canada, and insofar as I am concerned, the people of Quebec.

•(1325)

Hon. Robert Thibault: Mr. Speaker, if the member saw a mutual admiration society, it is because we have done a tremendous job together. That must be recognized and kept in mind.

In regard to the famous democratic deficit, the Liberal Party won more free votes, when the members can vote as they wish, than all the other parties combined.

We suggested that all private members' bills could be voted on, and we also had an initiative on the election of committee chairs.

We are still working on the plans of our caucus, which is a real forum for debate. We have also created new structures in our caucus to encourage greater participation.

In regard to the famous vote on the New Democratic motion, it strikes me as absolutely ridiculous to create a precedent that we can vote on non-confidence motions that apply later. Under a minority government, we would pass a non-confidence motion to take effect upon receipt of a notice from a party leader. That is absolutely ridiculous.

There is one way to do it. We could vote on confidence motions, that is, motions expressing confidence in the government. It has won all the confidence motions based on various bills. I think that this is how the House should operate in accordance with its traditions and rules.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

It is a privilege today to rise on behalf of my constituents of Fundy Royal to speak to only a few of the many reasons why the tired and corrupt Liberal government has lost the confidence of this House.

This House is condemning the Liberal government for its arrogance in refusing to reasonably compromise with the opposition parties over the timing of the next general election and for its culture of entitlement, corruption, scandal, and gross abuse of public funds for its own political purposes.

It could be said that the loss of confidence in the minority Liberal government has been a long time coming. The loss of confidence at this time is the accumulation of more than a decade of mismanagement, waste, and even the stubborn denial of problems that Canadians knew beyond any doubt existed.

Sector by sector, throughout our economy, the Liberals have lost confidence. Group by group, concerned about strong social policies, have lost confidence in the Liberal brand. Canadian by Canadian, concerned about the waste, mismanagement and even theft of their hard earned tax dollars, have lost confidence in the government's ability to clean up the mess exposed by the Auditor General and confirmed by Justice Gomery.

I want to discuss a few other areas where everyday Canadians from my constituency have contacted me to express a lack of confidence in the government's ability to look out for their interests.

First, I will speak a bit about agriculture which is very important in my riding of Fundy Royal. Earlier this week we debated an opposition motion calling on the Government of Canada to give our negotiators at the World Trade Organization talks a mandate to ensure that Canada's supply management sectors are protected and that any agreement reached strengthens the international marketing position of Canada's agricultural sectors.

That motion had to be tabled and debated because farmers and all agricultural stakeholders across Canada are not confident that the government is ensuring that our supply management system will survive the current round of negotiations at the WTO. We should not have had to twist the Liberal government's arms to force it to support our farmers so late in these trade negotiations. The Liberal government in Ottawa should be fighting to protect our producers of eggs, milk and chicken. Rather than taking the lead, the Liberals have been shamed into supporting our farmers.

The agriculture sector in Canada's economy has no confidence in the government's ability to command our negotiators to stand against the agricultural subsidies, tariffs, and other supports that rich economies, namely the United States and Europe, have been giving their agricultural producers.

In my home province of New Brunswick alone, there are 260 dairy farm operations that generate \$90 million in farm cash receipts. These are stable businesses, providing steady employment. I have confidence that only a Conservative government will defend the interests of all Canadian farmers on the international stage.

Another area where my constituents have certainly lost confidence in the government is in the area of child care. The Liberal child care plan claims to be universal, but it does not give a single penny to stay-at-home parents, family caregivers, and shift workers. It is particularly biased against those living in rural communities. We have been asking for, and what our Conservative Party stands for, child care dollars to be given directly to parents and letting them decide what is best for their own children.

I want to talk a bit about keeping promises. That is something that this Prime Minister did when he first came to office. He made a lot of promises that Canadians expected him to keep. Canadians certainly cannot have confidence in a government that does not keep its promises.

It started, famously enough, in 1993 when the Liberal government stated it would "kill, scrap and axe the GST". Of course that did not happen. Ever since then, we have had virtually no confidence in anything that the government says.

Supply

Even today we read of another broken promise. We hear that the party opposite intends to run a nasty and dirty campaign, a campaign that is negative. This is what the Prime Minister has stated in the past:

As we go into that election campaign let us understand that we are a party of principle,—

● (1330)

I think Canadians will have a chance in the next election to judge those very principles. He stated also, "I would hope that this would be a campaign of ideas. I do not want to sink to that level". Yet today, another broken promise, word that we are going to have a negative campaign coming from that side.

The Prime Minister also famously came to power promising to eliminate the democratic deficit. He even, in a way, coined the phrase. What a total farce.

I sit on a subcommittee that is studying the appointment of judges. In spite of evidence from witness after witness that political connections play an important role and some would say the most important role in being selected to the judiciary, the Minister of Justice refused to even acknowledge in any way that any such a link existed. This was in spite of one study in the province of Quebec that showed that over 60% of appointees since 2000 contributed to the Liberal Party of Canada. The fact is that less than 1% of Canadians contribute to any political party, yet when it comes to the appointment of judges, over 60% had contributed to just one party, the party in power.

That is the kind of thing that causes Canadians and members of this House to lose confidence in the government, especially when all it will do is deny a problem even exists. We all know that in order to solve a problem, we first have to admit that there is a problem. I have heard time and time again the Minister of Justice and other ministers say that there is no problem. How can the government fix the democratic deficit when it refuses to admit it exists? The answer very simply is that it cannot.

I believe that a Conservative government is the only one that Canadians can trust that will restore democratic faith in our system.

We have been hearing quite a bit about the Liberal ad scam program, and a lot of this debate centres around it. The government of the day almost lost the Quebec sovereignty referendum. Afterward it told us to be confident, that everything would be okay. Yet we find that the scheme that it set up, instead of bringing Canada together, instead of building a stronger country, has brought us to the point where we are today, where we are torn, we are split. It has created such a backlash among Canadians, such a loss of faith, because the Liberal Party could not see that there is a difference between the country that we all love, the country of Canada, and the Liberal Party of Canada.

That is what Justice Gomery found. He found that there was an intricate web of kickbacks and illegal contributions and deception involving millions of taxpayer dollars spent on Liberal election campaigns. I want to read some quotes from Justice Gomery:

They disregarded the relevant laws governing donations to political parties.

The LPCQ as an institution cannot escape responsibility for the misconduct of its officers and representatives.

Supply

Two successive Executive Directors were directly involved in illegal campaign financing, and many of its workers accepted cash payments for their services when they should have known that such payments were in violation of the Canada Elections Act.

The Commission of Inquiry Found:[...] the refusal of Ministers, senior officials in the Prime Minister's Office and public servants to acknowledge their responsibility for the problems of mismanagement that occurred.

The negligent administration of the Sponsorship Program by PWGSC [Public Works and Government Services Canada] opened the door wide to profiteering by those five [communications and advertising] agencies and their owners, and they took full advantage of the opportunity.

Canadians know that as long as the Liberal Party of Canada is in power, no one will be held accountable, no one will be punished, and no meaningful reforms will be made.

I firmly believe that only by electing a Conservative government led by the member for Calgary Southwest will we clean up the mess left behind by the Liberal government.

● (1335)

Finally, the current Liberal government has absolutely no credibility when it comes to tax cuts. We all know that. I have been hearing so much from my constituents. Nobody is fooled. I do not believe there is one Canadian in the country that is fooled by a last ditch deathbed conversion when it comes to tax cuts.

I am encouraged that the Liberals have chosen to run on our platform. All of a sudden we hear the Minister of Justice talking about getting tough on crime. The Minister of Finance, who year after year has said that there is no money for tax cuts, that Canadians cannot have a tax cut, that the government cannot afford a tax cut, is now proposing a tax cut.

Canadians will not be fooled. There is a loss of faith in the government. I believe that the time has come for Canadians to have their say and to pass judgment on the government.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties and I believe you will find consent for the following motion. I move:

That at the conclusion of today's debate on the Conservative Opposition Motion, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until the end of government orders on Monday, November 28, 2005,

And that, during this debate, no dilatory motions shall be received by the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the chief government whip have the consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member, as a new member, has worked very hard to have some influence here.

One of things that has concerned me in all of this debate since the Gomery hearings and the report is the continued use of the word "corruption". Corruption is an illegal activity. Even in the Mulroney government there were three Conservative cabinet ministers who in fact were charged with corrupt activities and lost their cabinet posts as a consequence.

I raise that because under the charter we have legal rights. We have the right to due process, the rule of law, to be able to defend ourselves. As the member will know and as the House will know, when we discussed Justice Gomery's mandate, he did not have the authority to determine criminal liability. That matter has to be dealt with by a court of law where people have the opportunity for due process.

Does the member believe that all Canadians are entitled to due process, for us to respect the rule of law, that once the RCMP completes its investigation, charges may be laid and that everyone who may be named in those charges is entitled to due process and the legal rights guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

● (1340)

Mr. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, we use the word "corruption" because these activities were corrupt. Justice Gomery found that bags of cash were exchanged under tables. There was an orchestrated, organized attempt to take money from Canadian taxpayers, money that the people in my riding worked so hard for, families trying to put their children through university, and single parents. These tax dollars were being taken from Canadian taxpayers and given to the member's party.

That is corrupt. That is why we use the word "corruption" to describe these activities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is at issue, really, is democracy. From day one, we have noted the lack of respect. The Liberal Party trampled democracy.

Quebec and Canada have worked hard to get this parliamentary system, and ministerial responsibility in particular. We could also mention the courts, and what not. However, ministerial responsibility, as defined by the Liberals, is lack of respect.

They say they did not know, they are not responsible, they were not aware, no one told them. That is not ministerial responsibility. It is an important choice, and those whose actions bring scandal ought to resign.

We have had several scandals: the gun registry, the HRDC boondoggle and, now, the sponsorship scandal. The problem with that is that the public no longer trusts the day-to-day management of the finances.

That is what we are told by everyone. If there is no money, they figure it is because it has gone somewhere else: into the pockets of close friends of the Liberal Party. That is what is at issue. That is the issue. The punishment for the Liberals, the public insists, is to get rid of them as soon as possible.

Here is my question to the hon. member. Is this motion not appropriate punishment? Is it not reasonable for the public to think that, once and for all, they will be getting what was coming to them and face the consequences of their actions, of their lack of respect for democracy?

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, this is about restoring accountability. There has to be accountability.

Justice Gomery found that the Liberal Party was responsible for these activities. It was the Liberal Party of Canada that benefited from these illegal activities, from taking taxpayers' money and indirectly or directly lining the pockets of Liberal Party activists and Liberal Party workers.

Absolutely, someone has to be responsible. The Liberal Party of Canada has to be responsible. The Prime Minister has to be responsible. The current Prime Minister was the minister of finance at that time. He was the minister responsible for the nation's financing. He was the caretaker of taxpayers' dollars. He was also responsible for this program that was being administered.

The then minister of finance, the current Prime Minister, should have known what was going on. It was his job to take care of our finances. The Liberal Party of Canada benefited from this program. Ultimately that responsibility is on the Liberals and now is an opportunity for Canadians, having heard what Justice Gomery said about the sponsorship scandal, to pass judgment on those responsible.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question is why do we need an election? The non-confidence motion says that this House has lost confidence in the government. To put it in simple terms, it is because it is time to clean house. Specifically, it is an indictment of the government by the House saying that the government is condemned for its arrogance, for its culture of entitlement and for the corruption, the scandal and the gross abuse of public funds for political purposes. The government has lost touch with the common people and it is here to serve only its own ends.

Why do we need an election? Because it is time to clean house. There is a job that needs to be done and it needs to be done now. In fact, the majority of people will take the time in a responsible way to exercise their duty and responsibility to set the country on the right course by electing a new government.

It is the solemn responsibility that must be exercised as a cloud falls over the present government. It is a fundamental change that the people of Canada are about to make and make it they will with all the seriousness and determination that will be required, despite the

Supply

time of year or the exact call of the day, because it is the right thing to do and it is the very thing that needs to be done to set our country on the right course and in the right direction.

Why does the Prime Minister want to wait until the second part of the Gomery report when the first part has been the fact finding part, and all the facts are in? It is not because he hopes to learn more about what happened, but rather it is the hope on his part that the public will have forgotten what happened, that the attention will be drawn to something else, that the real transgressions, that the severity and the magnitude of them will somehow be softened by the lens of time.

The Prime Minister is afraid to face the music, or shall I say the consequences. It is the cowardly act of not wanting to face the consequences here and now when the evidence is still fresh. The government has taken away supply days and the opportunity for earlier confidence votes. Now it is trying to say that somehow the opposition is forcing an election at this time of the year.

I am a lawyer, and Gomery indicated that on the evidence he could not find any blame or responsibility. That is not saying there is not any blame or responsibility. A case can be won or lost based on the evidence that is presented. One can have a winning case and still lose if the evidence is not presented or the necessary evidence is unavailable at the time of the hearing, or it is not pursued with the vigour required to unearth it to bring it forward. In fact, it may be because the nature of the evidence is buried and cannot be brought forward.

To use the words "based on the evidence" makes the finding very qualified. Let me reiterate what I mean. Justice Gomery said in respect to one aspect of the hearing:

It is extraordinary that no witness is willing to tell the Commission exactly what transpired in the period following the political decision made by Cabinet on February 1-2, 1996....It is impossible to believe that there were no meetings or discussions involving the Prime Minister and his staff during that period concerning the implementation of the decision, but Mr. Pelletier conveniently purports to have no recollection of what actually happened.

That does not mean that there were no meetings. It only means that based on the evidence, he could not find that meetings took place.

He also spoke about Lafleur Communications and how he had the suspicion that the objective of public works was to qualify them as quickly as possible so it could be one of the suppliers, although he had a suspicion the evidence was not there.

Somehow the Prime Minister interprets or takes the words of Justice Gomery to say he is exonerated from blame or for any carelessness or misconduct. The one person who knew of the evidence is the Prime Minister who made a national address saying the following with respect to his involvement. He said:

Let me speak plainly: what happened with the sponsorship file occurred on the watch of a Liberal government. Those who were in power are to be held responsible. And that includes me.

That sounds like a confession. He went on to say, "I was the Minister of Finance. Knowing what I've learned this past year, I am sorry that we weren't more vigilant". Then he had a stroke of conscience and corrected himself, "That I wasn't more vigilant. Public money was misdirected and misused and that is unacceptable".

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This happened on his watch, while he was the finance minister, when he knew where every penny moved, where every dollar went. He was not there to ensure that it did not happen. He must now face Canadians and let them judge. The facts are in and it is time for the jury to make its decision.

• (1345)

When the captain was involved, we have to wonder about the involvement of the first officer. The Prime Minister either knew of the general climate in Quebec or he otherwise turned a blind eye to what was going on around him. He was an able minister and he had the pulse of what was taking place when he orchestrated a silent coup to displace the then prime minister. He stated that he knew nothing, saw nothing, yet nothing moved without his knowing.

One would think that the government would have learned from the Gomery experience, but it is clear that it has not. We have only to look at the Dingwall affair and the Herle affair to see for ourselves that despite the multitude of promises and assurances from the Prime Minister that things would change, they have not. Nothing has changed.

Let us look at the Dingwall affair. An executive quits his job, the Prime Minister issues high praise for him, yet his expense account would make the most liberal of Liberals blush. That is okay, let us pay him a severance of \$500,000 without even blinking an eye. Only when extreme pressure was placed on the government, did the Prime Minister blush at his earlier comments.

Let me give the House a more current example of the culture of which I speak.

The rules say that bids are to be solicited before any contract is entered into. There are certain exceptions, pressing emergencies, contracts under \$25,000 and so on. Mr. Herle, known to just about everybody as the national Liberal campaign co-chair and party pollster, was given a contract to the maximum amount of \$23,112, just under the \$25,000 rule limit, where he billed about \$3,000 without bids being solicited. He was contracted to provide advice, including advice on public opinion research, regarding the Minister of Finance's mini-budget or economic update. Was there anything wrong with that? He said that the contract had been given by the Department of Finance. It was within the rules, and the guidelines were followed.

The government does not get it. There is something with that culture of entitlement with benefiting its own. It is the idea as Rex Murphy stated of "tacit license to feed and appoint its own, to make merry with the public purse and a mockery of all the established rules under the self-serving gloss that it is acting in the public good". As he further put it, "It's a closed, incestuous circle in which elected office is seen as a lever to reward friends or party workers or as the ideal base to prepare for lucrative careers on the public purse after elected politics", the whole gauntlet of reward appointments for the well connected. He went on to say, "But outside of those extremes, they've hit the bottom of the barrel, dug underneath the barrel, and found an even lower place where there are no self-respecting barrels at all".

That is why we must have an election and why the government must go.

New rules to show the way are important, but what is more important is a brand new set of people and a brand new government that will truly be the people's servants, who will be prepared to take a loss and sacrifice for the good of the country, for the good of its people, not because that is what the public would expect but because it is the right thing to do.

All of this is best highlighted and shown for what it is by the recent announcement by an individual who was prepared to pay a huge personal price and to make a personal sacrifice in order to do the right thing. The epitome of what I say, Mr. Allan Cutler, who blew the whistle. He knows all about this. I am reminded of his words earlier this week when he said that he took a look around and was impressed with what he saw in the federal accountability act, but more important, in the leader of the opposition as well as those around him.

Mr. Cutler wants to see accountability in government. Canadians, people who work hard, pay their taxes and play by the rules also want to see accountability in political leaders, and our leader exemplifies that. Mr. Cutler and all Canadians want to see the end of the influence of money in politics. Our leader is the right man to do the job. Mr. Cutler, along with all Canadians, value honesty and integrity in a leader and that is something our leader exemplifies.

This team will clean house and will implement the tough federal accountability act to ensure that this does not happen again. We have the plan, we have the rules and we have the right people. We do not have to wait for Justice Gomery any longer. We need an election because it is time to clean house. It is this culture of corruption and entitlement that must go and it must go now. The people of Canada will see to this.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member on his presentation. He explained the issue really well, particularly when he talked about the responsibility of the current Prime Minister in the sponsorship scandal. Everyone knows that he was aware of what was going on.

It is true that the Prime Minister is not directly blamed in the Gomery report. However, if we read between the lines, it is clear that, considering the positions held at the time by the current Prime Minister, namely that of vice-president of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, he had some responsibility.

In fact, Justice Gomery talks about this in his Summary. He defines the Treasury Board as follows: "The Treasury Board... functions as a management board overseeing all federal government operations". This means that nothing happens without first being checked by the president or the vice-president of the Treasury Board. And who was the vice-president at the time? It was the current Prime Minister.

Similarly, if we read between the lines, we notice that Justice Gomery refers to ministerial accountability. We mentioned it earlier. He said: "Law, tradition or convention dictate that the Minister has sole authority for the management and direction...". Contrary to the definition of ministerial accountability given by the Liberals, if we read between the lines, it becomes very clear that the current Prime Minister was responsible.

I have a question for the hon. member. He concluded his speech by saying that this government deserves the punishment that the public will mete out. Does he think that the government should step down immediately?

• (1355)

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, if I ran a department or were a head of government, I would take responsibility for what happened on my watch. One cannot have billions of dollars going by without knowing something is wrong.

When we look at what happened in the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party, it was quite deep and vast and a lot of funds were misused. One would have to wonder at some point. They had a specific meeting to set up this fund. Moneys were going through with no particular audit trails or approval processes. I would have thought one might have wanted to ask if moneys were being dispensed in a proper way when one part of the province was doing very well in meeting its expenses and paying its employees.

There is an obligation on those who are responsible to ensure not only that the systems are in place but to be vigilant. To use the words of the Prime Minister, "I should have more vigilant". He could have said "we". Corporately we have a responsibility to be more vigilant, but he personally had a responsibility to be more vigilant and to see that this kind of thing did not take place.

As elected members of this House, there is a responsibility that goes with the office. If things happen under our watch, the responsibility has to kick in. The public will see to it that the ultimate justice is paid in this case. It is a culture that has pervaded government. The Liberals almost do not recognize that there is a problem. It is for that reason that a cleaning of this House is required.

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am just listening to the debates this morning and I hear all the members of the House talking about what the Liberal government has done to Canadians for the last decade, stealing money and funneling it into its Quebec arm, et cetera. I want to know if things have changed with the government.

Clearly, \$40 million is still missing. Right now the Liberal government refuses to sue itself to recover any of that money. Therefore, I do not see anything changing. We still hear about the Prime Minister running around the country on taxpayer dollars, in corporate jets paid for by taxpayers, for Liberal fundraising and Liberal Party initiatives.

We even see now an orgy of spending by the Minister of Finance of billions of dollars. Here is the crux of the issue. Nothing has changed with the government. Our aboriginal communities are still on boil water orders. Even in Ontario, 40 reserves are still boiling water.

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The government has not done anything in 10 years. Is not the best thing for Canadians—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that it would be awfully difficult for a person to make the decision whether he was going to sue himself or those close to him. Those decisions should be made at least at arm's length and perhaps should be made by those who have no connection or anything to benefit by it.

In terms of a change in direction, we have had ample time now in the House, in this session, to see that very little has changed. The means are whatever are necessary to get to the end. If the end is staying in power, to continue the culture of entitlement to benefit those around them, if it means the Liberals have to drop billions of dollars, in fact, empty the entire vault just to stay in power and do things a day or two before an election, or buying votes, that is wrong. This is the exact thing that needs to be rooted out of this place.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

ANNE PENNELL

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lawrence Pennell, who served his country with great distinction as Solicitor General of Canada during the mid-1960s, recently suffered the loss of his wife of many years.

Anne Pennell was a woman of class and dignity who, behind her modest and retiring nature, was a lady of ability, character and strong social conscience. She was active in the cause of education in my riding of Brant and was for many years an unflagging volunteer canvasser for several charitable organizations.

In spirit and thought, she lived a wonderful unchanging life and was a person of faith and hope who brought the sweetness of love and laughter into the family home.

On behalf of my community, I wish to express our collective heartfelt gratitude for her life, her work and her example of an extraordinary human being. As someone once said, I desire to live worthily as long as I live and to leave to those who come after my memory and good works.

* * *

MEMBER FOR WESTLOCK—ST. PAUL

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to pay tribute to my friend and colleague, the member for Westlock—St. Paul.

The member first arrived here with his Reform Party compatriots in the rebellion of '93. The political landscape was forever changed as they began a process of tearing down big arrogant government, something we will finish next week.

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The member for Westlock—St. Paul was re-elected three more times with tremendous plurality, showing the growing respect and admiration held by his constituents. The member was born in Westlock and produced grain and cattle while becoming a highly regarded expert in gas and oil exploration.

He is a man who personifies the work ethic that has built Alberta into the economic powerhouse it is today. My friend from Westlock—St. Paul is the consummate Albertan, a gentleman of soft speech and iron will, a man of principle and dignity. He has sacrificed neither during his years in the chamber.

On behalf of his constituents, the Conservative Party of Canada and all members of the House, I wish all the best in the years ahead for Dave and his family.

* * *

FORT GARRY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just south of my riding is the St. Norbert Heritage Park, an excellent collection of Métis homes and artifacts set in an historically significant site.

The Fort Garry Historical Society is based in my riding and has been doing an exceptional job preserving the site, the building and the artifacts. It is now in the process of restoring another home, the Delorme Residence. The cost of the restoration is slightly over \$200,000.

I wish to recognize the Fort Garry Historical Society and its committed membership for undertaking this new venture. The Delorme house is of significant historical value in Manitoba as it is associated with Louis Riel and the north west rebellion.

I wish them well in their fundraising efforts and I look forward to touring the new addition to the St. Norbert Heritage Park.

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[*Translation*]**FOREIGN POLICY**

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, so far, the online consultation with the public in Quebec and Canada conducted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade concerning Canada's international policy statement has clearly demonstrated that, for Quebecers and Canadians alike, fighting world poverty should be at the forefront of Canada's broader objectives with respect to international cooperation.

The majority of respondents agree that the most important factor in determining international aid levels and conditions should be poverty reduction and that Canada should schedule firm budgetary expenditures so as to reach the international aid target of 0.7% of GDP by 2015.

Despite what he said at the UN World Summit in September about the importance of reducing world poverty, the Prime Minister failed to turn his words into actions by committing to reach the 0.7% target by 2015.

[*English*]**CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE AWARENESS WEEK**

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week the Correctional Service Canada and communities across the country are celebrating Citizens' Advisory Committee Awareness Week.

[*Translation*]

Citizens' advisory committees have been part of the correctional process for more than 25 years. All federal penitentiaries and parole offices are advised by nearly 600 citizens on such committees. Citizens' advisory committees help enhance public security in Canada by strengthening the bonds between the communities and the correctional system.

[*English*]

I would like to encourage all members of Parliament to join me in recognizing and congratulating those who contribute as members of 106 citizens' advisory committees across Canada.

* * *

● (1405)

MEMBER FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA SOUTHERN INTERIOR

Mr. Jim Gouk (British Columbia Southern Interior, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is probably the last time I will rise in the House as a member of Parliament. After four terms of representing the good people of the most scenic riding in Canada, it is time for me to pursue other interests.

Those interests will involve a lot more time with my family, especially my wife Ann, who has been unwavering in her support of my career both as an MP and prior to that. We often hear of the sacrifices made by the members of the House but we do not speak often enough of the sacrifices made by members' families. My wife has made whatever success I have enjoyed possible. I intend to spend much more time with her than I have been able to do in the past. It is her time too.

I thank the members of my board for their unwavering support. I thank and acknowledge my staff, Danielle Jackson, Sarah Tupholme and Bonnie Fowler. Not only have they been tireless in their efforts on behalf of constituents but they have become very special friends.

Finally, I want to thank my constituents for the incredible honour that they have provided me to be allowed to represent them here in Ottawa. I thank them sincerely and leave here hoping that I have measured up to what they expected of me.

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UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, congratulations go to the University of Waterloo for once again being named the best comprehensive university in the country and ranked number one in all measures in this category in *Maclean's* national reputation survey: the highest quality, leaders of tomorrow, most innovative and best overall.

Innovation is a major ingredient in the University of Waterloo's success. Its pioneering of the co-op education program and allowing members of the university to retain their intellectual property have paid big dividends: the University of Waterloo personnel have founded 22% of all technology transfer companies created by a university in Canada.

When all universities in all categories were compared, the University of Waterloo was still judged the number one university in the country. I congratulate the University of Toronto for placing second. Congratulations also go out to all Canadian universities because they all provide high quality education for students across the country.

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[Translation]

DIABETES MONTH

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, November is diabetes month and more than 550,000 Quebecers live with this disease.

Diabetes is of concern to me because I have a son who is a type 1, insulin-dependent diabetic.

There is no cure for this disease and it has a very high economic cost, estimated at \$2 billion a year in Quebec and \$13 billion in Canada.

The socio-economic impact of diabetes is also a harsh reality for diabetics. They are denied access to certain professions or often lose their jobs. Their families are more often in crisis as a result.

Canada has one of the highest incidences of juvenile diabetes in the world. Conversely, it is significantly behind in terms of government support for research into this disease.

In handing out billions of pre-election dollars, did the Prime Minister perhaps forget a gift for people with diabetes?

* * *

ORLÉANS FRANCOPHONE INVOLVEMENT MOVEMENT

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 27 years, MIFO, the Francophone involvement movement in Orléans, has been showcasing francophone culture and promoting the cultural expression of the Orléans community. It meets artistic, cultural, social, community and educational needs by providing a variety of services in French for francophones and francophiles of all ages, from the very young to the not so young.

To show how much MIFO is appreciated, I wish to inform hon. members that during the recent Francophonie Gala put on by ACFO Ottawa, MIFO, its general director and its president won the Grandmaître award for the organization that has made the greatest contribution to the development of the Ottawa francophone community.

Ottawa—Orléans is pleased and extremely proud of this jewel of our Franco-Ontarian heritage. We wish MIFO many more years of success.

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[English]

MEMBER FOR OKANAGAN—SHUSWAP

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to pay tribute to my great friend, the member for Okanagan—Shuswap. Over the past 12 years, this member has been steadfast in his loyalty to his constituents and Conservative values. His commitment and work ethic can be traced back to his days in ranching and mining.

When he first landed on Parliament Hill back in 1993, he proudly stated, "When I go to Ottawa, Ottawa won't change me!" I will admit that nothing has changed this man. He proudly wore his stetson and cowboy boots to remind his constituents that he was their man in Ottawa.

There are enough stories over the last 12 years to fill the entire Library of Parliament, many of which cannot be repeated here. There were many issues he was passionate about, including softwood lumber, free trade, justice, child pornography, marriage, euthanasia and terrorism.

Personally, I will deeply miss his friendship on the Hill. He has a long battle ahead of him but I know there is no one tougher to fight this fight than the member for Okanagan—Shuswap.

I am sure if we had a parliamentary hall of fame this member's stetson would proudly hang to remind us all that we are here not for ourselves but for our constituents.

May God bless my good friend.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

LIBERAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today's opposition motion demonstrates beyond a shadow of doubt that we are approaching the end of the 38th Parliament. Although there is much still to be done for the well-being of all Canadians, I would like to take advantage of this opportunity today to thank all the members of the Liberal Women's Caucus, as well as the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, the hon. member for Jeanne—Le Ber, for the confidence they have shown in me throughout the past year in my capacity as chair of that caucus, as well as member for Gatineau.

The Liberal Women's Caucus that I chaired has had a great influence on a number of issues, including the missile defence shield, additional funding for seniors and natural caregivers from the Minister of Finance, national child care, and gender equality.

My thanks to all these committed Liberal women. See you again soon.

S. O. 31

[English]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Edith Kaggwa is a hard-working registered practical nurse at St. Peter's Hospital in my riding. She has four daughters aged 12, 9, 6 and 5, three of them born here in Canada.

Edith is an active member of her church and a well liked member of the hospital staff, but next week she faces possible deportation to Uganda, one of the most dangerous places on Earth. Edith is so afraid that she would rather put her daughters in the care of the Children's Aid Society than take them to Uganda.

Amnesty International reports that thousands of Ugandan girls as young as eight years old are used as domestic slaves, raped and assigned as wives by the Lord's Resistance Army.

Edith's husband was deported to Uganda five years ago and no one has heard from him since.

The Hamilton community is rallying in support of Edith Kaggwa. On their behalf, I call on the immigration minister today to help Edith and her family. Let them remain safe and sound in Canada, their adopted home.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal government took power, our criminal justice system has been seriously weakened and Canadians' safety jeopardized.

The Liberals' bleeding heart mentality has resulted in dangerous offenders walking free. Under the government there is absolutely no truth in sentencing. This is not just the opinion of those of us on this side of the House. It is the opinion of police officers such as Corporal Randy Yaschuk of the Strathmore RCMP.

Corporal Yaschuk was the arresting officer when Shawn Robert Sherwin was charged with 17 counts of breaking and entering, four counts of theft, firearms possession and mischief.

Sherwin was sentenced to five years in February 2005 but, courtesy of the Liberal government, Sherwin was released on parole on November 11. He served only 10 months. As a result, the people of Rockyford, Alberta live in fear that he will move back into their community and re-offend.

It is time we replaced the government, a government that puts the rights of offenders ahead of the rights of victims and the protection of society. It is time for change.

* * *

[Translation]

MEMBER FOR SAINT-MAURICE—CHAMPLAIN

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mark the departure of a number of our colleagues who will not be running in the next election campaign.

The Bloc Québécois wishes to thank the 20 or so MPs who will not be running again for the contribution they have made to democracy.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the dean of the Bloc Québécois contingent, our colleague for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, who is leaving us.

A long-time sovereignist and committed activist, who sat in the National Assembly under the leadership of René Lévesque, he has instilled all of his wisdom, determination and courage into our caucus.

We are proud to have had the opportunity to work with him and I can assure him that we will continue his fight to ensure that justice is done with regard to low-income seniors and the GIS.

Thank you for your work, your devotion to Quebec, and your friendship.

So long, Marcel.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

GOMERY REPORT

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one cannot read Gomery without recognizing how it chronicles the last 12 years of Liberal greed. Justice Gomery himself stated:

The Report that follows chronicles a depressing story of multiple failures to plan a government program appropriately and to control waste—a story of greed, venality and misconduct...in government....

Senior Liberals deliberately circumvented federal legislation, including the Canada Elections Act, the Lobbyists Registration Act, the Access to Information Act and the Financial Administration Act as well as federal contracting policy and the Treasury Board transfer payments policy. This clearly resulted in a culture of entitlement among Liberal political officials.

The Liberals have a million excuses but Canadians only need one question answered. With Gomery documenting millions of dollars in waste and the rampant abuse of the public service, why is it the Liberals did nothing until they were caught?

* * *

TOURISM AWARD

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Keskinada Loppet, which takes place in my riding of Hull—Aylmer, recently won the Hertz Canada event of the year award at the national awards for tourism excellence of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

This event, which has been held in Gatineau since 1982, has helped put Canada on the map as a premier winter destination. With more than 11,000 participants from over 20 countries, it is Canada's largest cross-country skiing event and represents Canada on the world loppet circuit of the sport's most noteworthy races.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Input from both visitors and participants generates continuous improvement. This year, the organizers of the Keski introduced a number of firsts in its history, including the setting of a Guinness record for the world's largest ski, on which 100 people managed to fit, new skiing events, a trade show, receptions and medal ceremonies.

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Keskinada Loppet and its president, Claude Laramée, for winning this prestigious award.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last days of this government are not a pretty sight. As if three budgets in the last nine months were not enough, the government is now throwing money at taxpayers at the rate of \$1 billion a day.

This is the typical Liberal thinking that Canadians are not smart enough to know when they are being bought with their own money.

Will the minister admit what analysts are already speculating: that the government is on a fast track to a deficit?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the party opposite was last in office, a long, long time ago, the deficit in this country was \$40 billion a year and rising out of control year after year.

It is this party that defeated the deficit. It is this party that balanced the budget. It is this party that has filed eight consecutive balanced budgets and we will keep going.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the legacy of this party is one of missed opportunities and mismanagement. As well, the colossal corruption uncovered by Mr. Justice Gomery is one legacy that will follow this government into infamy.

That should be bad enough, but the government is not satisfied. Now it wants to spend the government into oblivion. Can the minister give us assurances that when a Conservative government takes over next year, there will be more left in this town than just the paintings on the wall and a few boxes of paper clips?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. gentleman that such an assurance is not necessary because there will not be a Conservative government in this town next year or the year after that or the year after that or the decade after that.

I would like that party to tell me what it opposes in labour market partnership agreements. What does it oppose in rectifying the historic wrongs of residential schools? What does it oppose in health and education for aboriginal people? What does it oppose in \$755 million for farmers? What does it oppose in supporting softwood workers? What is it against?

● (1420)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I should tell my excitable friend is that we oppose Liberal Party corruption.

The Liberals are asking Canadians to please ignore that little \$100 million larceny thing by showering potential voters with billions of dollars in announcements, with well over \$10 billion in new spending so far this week, most of it without plans attached. This is a real recipe for waste and corruption.

Why does the minister not just admit that this is nothing more than the corrupt, old, tired Liberal Party masquerading as a government?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. gentleman that this minister, this Prime Minister and this government oppose corruption wherever it is found. The government has acted in the most decisive manner in Canadian history to deal with a serious problem and to deal with it in a transparent way.

On the fiscal side, I would point out to the hon. gentleman that if he would spend five minutes reading the fiscal update rather than his press clippings, he would find in that fiscal update the reference to the job that needed to be done for aboriginal people and that it would be provided in the fiscal framework, and the same with labour market agreements and the same with the aid to farmers and the same for softwood—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

* * *

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are glad to see that the Minister of Finance has finally accepted the Conservative Party position that we need to cut the taxes on dividends to level the field on income trusts. It is too bad the minister had to knock billions of dollars off the value of people's portfolios before he did it.

However, yesterday the parliamentary secretary to the minister said on television that the government also plans to impose a tax on income trusts. I was sitting with him when he said it. Why is the government continuing to threaten income trust holders with more taxes?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman knows that is untrue. In fact, he contents himself with dealing in the realm of political fluff.

I would prefer to quote the Canadian Association of Income Funds, which says it is "pleased with the federal government's decision to take a practical and even-handed approach in leveling the playing field", or the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, which says, "Kudos to the federal finance minister", or the Real Property Association of Canada, which says we are to be congratulated for the serious work that we have done on this file.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the camera does not lie. I am not so sure about the Liberals.

It says here that the trusts will be—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: In putting his question, the hon. member will want to remember the lectures he has had from me on parliamentary language and will want to stick with pertinent details.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Here is what the parliamentary secretary said, “The trust will be taxed going out or starting I think around 2007”. Then he went on to give a very detailed explanation of how this new tax would work.

When will the minister admit that the second part of the Liberal plan on income trusts is to impose a new tax on income trusts if the Liberals get re-elected? Is it not just the Liberal hidden agenda?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very strange to see how everybody else in the country can understand it, but this one finance critic from the Conservative Party cannot understand it.

I quoted the real estate association. I quoted the income funds association. I quoted the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. Let me quote from BMO Nesbitt Burns, which states that this result “doesn't penalize the existing trusts and gets rid of a high rate of double taxation on dividends. I see this as a very positive move...”. Goodman & Company says, “This is outstanding”. The Yellow Pages Group believes “the decision to cut the taxation on dividends will make Canada more competitive”.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we saw the true colours of the Liberals. After voting in favour of the bill put forward by the Bloc Québécois, asking for full retroactivity for seniors who were deprived of the guaranteed income supplement, the Liberals rejected the Bloc's proposal to proceed to passage of the bill. Seniors in need have been waiting for this money for many years.

The government agreed to fast-track several bills through the legislative process. Why will the Prime Minister not do the same for a bill designed to help low income seniors?

[English]

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as was discussed earlier in the House, the government has put in \$2.7 billion for low income seniors. This is the first time since 1984, other than a cost of living allowance, for this. That is a \$433 increase for all low income seniors, 1.6 million of them, and we will continue to do more to ensure that our low income seniors live with the dignity they deserve.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at second reading, the Liberals voted in favour of full retroactivity on the guaranteed income supplement. That was very clearly recorded yesterday.

We are asking that we proceed with this bill as we have done with others and pass it immediately. But the Liberals refuse. They are the only ones. The Conservatives agree, as do the New Democrats. Is it

not true that a new height in hypocrisy was reached yesterday? The Liberals want to go to the electorate saying, “We agree”. But there has been no action to match the rhetoric. They will not admit to that. But now they have been exposed.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of the heights of hypocrisy, that is precisely where the Bloc Québécois is going today. A vote took place yesterday. The Liberals voted in favour of the bill. The Liberals increased the guaranteed income supplement for seniors. They have made sure that the maximum number of seniors are eligible for this supplement by implementing advertising programs and ensuring that all seniors have access to the GIS. We are increasing the income of seniors. This is not mere rhetoric, and we are not playing petty politics on the backs of seniors, unlike the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my political career is coming to an end and, yesterday, I saw the House at both its best and worst.

Is the Prime Minister not ashamed that his party voted in favour of the bill to make the guaranteed income supplement retroactive and then, two minutes later, refused to pass it at final stage?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to wish the hon. member a happy retirement and tell him that the seniors he informed of the guaranteed income supplement were able to apply for and receive that supplement. He did this, along with all the Liberal members and all the members in the House who are helping to educate the public about the government's programs.

All members have the duty to do this. What is important is the amount that seniors are getting and, with this in mind, this government has increased the guaranteed income supplement for seniors more than any other government has. This also needs to be said.

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that answer is unacceptable. Seniors in need of the guaranteed income supplement have been deprived of \$3.2 billion over the past 12 years.

Even if the Liberals increase the GIS, seniors who were deprived of it in the past are still living in poverty. The money is sitting in the government's coffers.

[English]

Hon. Tony Ianno (Minister of State (Families and Caregivers), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well, as we have said in the last year and a half, that our interest in ensuring that our seniors live with dignity will continue to be enhanced with the many policies we are bringing forward.

The hon. member knows that this is an immediate relief process with over \$6,000 per year in the guaranteed income supplement for seniors in need. It is an immediate relief program. That is what we continue to work on to ensure, with the rent supplements, affordable housing and RRAP, that these programs will continue to allow our seniors to live with the dignity they deserve.

Oral Questions

●(1430)

CHILD POVERTY

Hon. Ed Broadbent (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 16 years ago today the Prime Minister and his party committed themselves to the abolition of child poverty by the year 2000. In the subsequent years, child poverty increased almost every year, while the finance minister was boasting of an accumulated surplus of \$60 billion.

With the new figures out today showing that more than a million kids are in poverty, how can the government justify this disgraceful broken promise?

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the report of Campaign 2000. However, I would like to remind all members here what it recommended in 2005 and what the government has done. We have an effective child benefit system with \$12 million in the national child tax benefit.

We have a universal accessible system of quality early learning and child care, something that the government has done. In fact, we signed our 10th agreement this morning with New Brunswick.

We have a significant increase in affordable housing. We have more affordable housing today, thanks to the minister of housing. There are more good jobs. There is no other government's—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Hon. Ed Broadbent (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have about half of those new commitments because the NDP forced the government.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Ottawa Centre has the floor.

Hon. Ed Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, today in the House of Commons the government House leader said that the best thing to do about child poverty was to produce jobs. He is flatly wrong. About 48% of the children living in poverty today live in families where both members of the family are working.

Given that the Liberal government abolished the federal minimum wage in 1993, will it bring it back and—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the increase in the basic personal amount of tax exemption, the reduction in the lowest rate up to \$36,000, will be of great assistance to low income Canadians.

Most importantly, this fiscal update included probably the best innovation in tax policy and social policy in the last decade, that is the creation of the working income tax benefit. That will help low income Canadians get over that welfare wall, get into the job market, and enjoy economic success.

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has not learned anything from the sponsorship scandal. After 12 years of Liberal corruption, this party continues to be arrogant. This time, to help organize its upcoming campaign, it has brought back Guy Brisson, who was involved in the sponsorship scandal.

The Prime Minister said he would clean things up. What is he waiting for to punish the Liberal cronies involved in the sponsorship scandal, instead of rewarding them?

The Speaker: Issues relating to the appointments of individuals do not fall under the government's responsibility.

The hon. member for Nepean—Carleton.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal culture of entitlement and media manipulation continues.

Charles Bird, a lobbyist for CTV news, has been appointed the Liberal Ontario campaign chair and yesterday said that he was planning to run a negative mudslinging campaign with his friends in the news media.

That is not unexpected from a party that gave envelopes stuffed full of dirty money to their candidates like Hélèn Scherrer who has now been rewarded for breaking the law with a comfy job in the PMO.

Why should anyone trust a Liberal government that brags about manipulating the media and gives rewards to corrupt politicians like Hélèn Scherrer?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam.

* * *

●(1435)

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the Gomery inquiry, the chief Liberal organizer, Marc-Yvan Côté, admitted that he handed out dirty money to 18 Liberal candidates in Quebec during the 1997 campaign. The Liberal party swears up and down that no one is above the law, but all the facts show that the law never applies to Liberal criminals.

When will the Prime Minister release the list of the 18 ridings that broke the law by accepting dirty money?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can certainly use every written question fed to him by some of his researchers, but the fact remains that Justice Gomery has spoken. He has decided whose names would be disclosed and who would be found at fault. I have full confidence in Justice Gomery and the hon. member should as well. Trying to tarnish the reputations of others does not become him and I think he has more class than that.

[English]

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Judge Gomery said \$40 million is still missing. We are trying to find it. We are trying to encourage the Prime Minister to go after his own party and to stop stealing money from Canadian taxpayers.

Receiving dirty sponsorship money is a crime. It is also a violation of the Elections Act. Liberal Marc-Yvon Côté admitted to giving stolen tax dollars illegally to 18 candidates in the province of Quebec. The Prime Minister has failed to name the 18 ridings, failed to get the money back, and failed to sue the Liberal Party and defend taxpayers.

We want to know on behalf of taxpayers, what more does the Prime Minister have to know to go after his own party, stop stealing money, and pay the money back to taxpayers?

The Speaker: I caution the hon. member about his use of words in suggesting that some hon. member is stealing money, but if the Minister of Public Works and Government Services wishes to respond to the question, he may do so.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows absolutely that the Liberal Party of Canada has paid every cent to the Canadian taxpayer that was received inappropriately. Beyond that, Mr. Justice Gomery said:

The persons responsible for these irregularities have been identified and reproached for their errors and misconduct. The procedure for uncovering wrongdoing is ponderous and expensive, but in the long run it works fairly well.

Mr. Justice Gomery has faith in our system. Justice Gomery has faith in our elected officials and our political parties. That hon. member is tarnishing the reputation of everybody in—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government voted yesterday against the Bloc Québécois bill on preventive withdrawal, which would have allowed Quebec women in workplaces regulated by the Canada Labour Code to receive the same benefits as women working under by Quebec law. They would have received 90% of their net income, instead of 55% of their gross income. Furthermore, they would have been able to keep their weeks of maternity leave.

How can we tell them that the government is refusing to give women whose jobs are regulated by federal legislation the same benefits that women in Quebec get under Quebec law?

[English]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Western Economic Diversification and Minister of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is looking at this under part III of the Canada Labour Code. We will take this under advisement and come up with the proper decision.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is still time for the Liberals to change their mind, since my bill was adopted at second reading and we could still have third reading, if the government wanted.

Therefore, I am asking the Prime Minister this: how can he make all sorts of announcements just before the election campaign and not give pregnant Quebec women priority, by ensuring that they receive the same benefits that the Quebec government gives its working women?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just saw the hon. member for Shefford rise. I must tell him that, if his party did not force an early election, we could talk in greater detail about his bill and all the others. However, you cannot have your cake and eat it too.

It is hypocritical of him to rise today to ask that a bill be passed, when he himself wants the House to be dissolved on Monday evening. They need to decide. His request makes no sense. He cannot dissolve the House and continue the debate on his bill.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber industry has unjustly had to pay \$5 billion in countervailing duties to the Americans, yet the plan announced today by the government advances a mere \$800 million in loan guarantees over five years, a paltry 16% of that amount.

Does the Minister of Industry realize that his plan is clearly inadequate? What is keeping him from offering loan guarantees, as the industry is asking, that will cover all \$5 billion in countervailing and anti-dumping duties paid to the Americans, a measure that would cost the public purse nothing ?

● (1440)

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we speak, our ministers are in the process of announcing a major program to help the forestry industry. It comprises not only loan guarantees in the order of some \$800 million, but also \$215 million for innovative processing technology, \$150 million to help communities adapt, and a considerable amount to expand current markets for lumber products, enhance skill levels and support bioenergy. This is a complete program providing complete support to the forest industry.

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in addition to insufficient loan guarantees, the government's plan says nothing about assuming the legal fees incurred by the companies and associations in the softwood lumber conflict.

Can the minister confirm that the commitment announced by the government last April still holds and that he will be sending a letter of intent on this to the industry associations so that the money will be available, whether or not there is an election?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Certainly, Mr. Speaker. The government is true to its word. It has made a commitment to help the industry in its legal battle with the United States. Unlike the Bloc Québécois members who do nothing but talk, we will deliver the goods, because we are in a position to do so. They have nothing but questions. We have the answers.

* * *

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, Auditor General Sheila Fraser reported that the number of Canadians who cheat on their taxes has doubled in the last five years. She also noted that the Canada Revenue Agency does not understand why. Perhaps it does, it just cannot say.

When the Liberal Party engages in contract giveaways and kickback schemes, no charges are laid. When Liberal patronage appointee André Ouellet spends wildly without receipts, no audit is made public.

Would the Prime Minister agree with me that not all Canadians who cheat on their taxes are Liberals, they are just acting like Liberals?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that type of question is really beneath contempt.

The Canada Revenue Agency is administering the tax rules of this country in a fair and equitable manner. It tries to be efficient and effective in the work that it does. On the other issues, no one in this country is above the law and the government will ensure that that is in fact the case.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is beneath contempt is the conduct of the government and it is time it was thrown out.

More Canadians than ever are cheating on their taxes and no wonder. Take a look at the legacy of waste: gun registry, boondoggle, André Ouellet, Dingwall's entitlements, sponsorship scandal, kickbacks, and now vote-buying in record numbers. To top it off, Canadians see a multimillionaire Prime Minister using offshore tax havens to dodge paying his own taxes.

Is the finance minister the last Canadian who does not understand why taxpayers are saying, "Liberals do not pay their taxes. Why should I pay mine?"

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a crock of unmitigated horse feathers.

Let us look at the record. From its peak at 68% of GDP when the Conservatives were in office, Canada's debt ratio today stands at just 38%. It is on its way to 25% and then 20% within 15 years. Our debt load when those people across the way were in office was the second worst in the G-7. Today it is the very best. The proportion of our debt that was in foreign hands when they were in office, 43%. Today it is just 15%.

Oral Questions

That party drove this country into the ground.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an unprecedented number of the Prime Minister's friends have benefited from the Liberal culture of entitlement. He ushered his Liberal pals into the Senate, including Art Eggleton, whose ethics apparently were not good enough even for Jean Chrétien. He is negotiating severance with Liberal David Dingwall. He appointed defeated Liberal candidate Glen Murray to a plum patronage job against the wishes of the House.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit what Canadians know well? The Liberal culture of entitlement thrives in his government.

● (1445)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is Justice Gomery said that under the previous Conservative government it was impossible for firms that were not Conservative related to get any advertising contracts.

Further, this government and the Prime Minister have done more to end this kind of activity, to ensure that Canadians have open, transparent and accountable government than any prime minister in the history of Canada.

I am proud, we are proud to sit with the Prime Minister defending the interests of Canadians and not throwing mud on everyone involved in the political process like that party is doing.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal crony and patronage deserves the same electoral defeat that the Conservatives got in 1993.

The Prime Minister's ethical deficit reaches a new low every day. Liberal hack David Herle received an untendered contract to write the Liberal election platform. A Liberal pollster received a verbal contract for taxpayer dollars. Liberal David Dingwall will receive a golden handshake on top of his \$350,000 illegal lobbying commission.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that patronage, cronyism and a culture of entitlement are alive and well in his Liberal government?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman's allegations are simply untrue. We can go through the points that he raised in his preamble and refute them one by one. On one for example, he referred to a particular contract that was let fully within the rules and it was fully published on the Internet before those folks across the way had even read the morning newspaper.

* * *

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House the deputy leader of the government tabled legislation that would limit contributions for election advertising by third parties.

Oral Questions

Could the minister update the House as to whether progress has been made to seek unanimous consent from the opposition to pass this important legislation?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Minister for Internal Trade, Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the opposition has refused to let the House deal with this legislation immediately. While disappointing, it is not surprising given that the Leader of the Opposition has spent a good chunk of his career trying to allow unlimited spending by third parties. In essence, the opposition refused to shut the door to U.S.-style political action committees.

Given that the bill will not become law, will the leader of the official opposition rescind his commitment to allow anyone to spend unlimited amounts of money to unduly influence the electoral process?

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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals wonder why Canadians call them morally bankrupt and democratically deficient. In a unanimous vote in June, Parliament called on the Prime Minister to deliver on our 0.7% obligation for international development assistance. Despite their \$20 billion spending binge, there is not one red cent for international development assistance.

Could the government explain why?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that in the budget in February we increased our foreign aid commitment by \$3.4 billion which was the largest increase ever. That was later increased in the summer by another \$500 million. We are investing \$342 million in a variety of programs to assist in health improvements in Africa; \$500 million to focus on peace and security; and we are also investing in the work at Doha to try to get a trade result in the international trade talks that will be friendly to the lesser developed countries of this world.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is just plain garbage.

In a \$20 billion spending binge, not one cent is going to meet our 0.7% ODA commitment. Not a single pill is flowing from the government's legislation to supposedly deliver antiretroviral drugs to Africa. Six thousand people are dying a day as a result of not getting those pills. We said the legislation was flawed.

What explanation does the government have for turning its back on the desperate and dying?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the earlier answer I referred to the very significant dollars, billions of dollars, that this government has committed to increase foreign aid. What I did not refer to were the other billions of dollars, between \$3 billion and \$4 billion, that we have contributed to eliminate third world debt, the debts owed by the poorest countries of this world to the rich countries of this world. Canada is a leader in that crusade. When this campaign is concluded in about six years not one poor country on the face of the earth will owe \$1 to Canada. The debt will be gone.

● (1450)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year the Prime Minister and immigration minister both proclaimed that the stripper program was cancelled. The minister said, "No way, it is not going to be done under my watch". Then behind Canadians' backs they secretly started it up again. The Liberals are still aiding those who traffic in women and they are still exposing vulnerable women to exploitation and abuse.

Why is it that Liberal promises simply cannot be trusted?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what was said a few months ago still stands.

What we do not appreciate is the fact that the Conservative Party is engaged in an ethic of distortion of the facts. If she can produce elements that will bear that out, then let her come forward with it. Otherwise, stop lying.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration knows words like that are unparliamentary and are not to be used. We will deal with that after.

The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again it becomes obvious that the minister graduated from the Liberal school of entitlement.

This year the minister spent more Canadian taxpayer money on entertainment expenses than it takes to feed a family for a whole year. Sadly, he thinks he is entitled to this. Excessive spending on meals, trips and questionable expenses plague his department and he continues to wallow at the trough.

Does the minister believe he is entitled to force hard-working taxpayers to fund his excessive, frivolous and unnecessary spending?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again distortion. Everything that I have done is above board and for the government.

Let me give the House some facts. My spending on travel was \$56,000. My critic opposite, for example, spent \$106,000 over that same period. I wonder, when he gets on a plane does he take a champagne shower and ask for caviar? Another member opposite spent \$138,000 on travel, and to boot, the Leader of the Opposition allowed four of his members, Rona, Helena, James and Rahim—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems like all that expensive pizza is getting to his head.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs says that rapper 50 Cent should not perform in Canada. With his hits like *Hustler's Ambition*, *Slow Dough* and *Power of the Dolla*, the rap star is known for glorifying theft, breaking the law and gangsterism. It sounds like he got his lyrics from the Gomery report.

Does the parliamentary secretary not see any hypocrisy in condemning 50 Cent when he merely glorifies standard practice in the Liberal government?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is so typical, I do not know whether it is the real Rahim or not.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I do not need to remind hon. members that referring to one another by other than their titles is out of order. This seems to be a habit that is catching. If the minister has a response to make without reference to members' names, then perhaps he could give it. I think he might refrain from referring to members by name.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, of course I would not have referred to the member by name if I could identify him. We are trying to find out who it is who sits on the other side.

We need to be able to deal with some of the questions that the parliamentary secretary, to whom he has referred, deals with seriously. This kind of sleaze on the other side does not help us to deal with the issues in a realistic and positive fashion. We have a program in place. We will deal with it.

Of course we abhor violence. Of course we denigrate this kind of—

• (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Palliser.

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POLITICAL PARTY FUNDRAISING

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems like another example of rules for Liberals and other rules for Canadians who want to play by the rules.

While Canadians have been ignored by the Prime Minister, \$5,000 buys privileged access for a few. He has been desperately raising money for his corrupt Liberal Party, most recently at a \$5,000 per ticket cocktail party. These funds will apparently be used to pay back a fraction of the money stolen from taxpayers. Yet because tax receipts are issued, all taxpayers will be subsidizing these donations.

Why does the Prime Minister think he is entitled to have hard-working taxpayers subsidize the repayment of money that was stolen from them in the first place?

The Speaker: I think the hon. member knows that questions about party fundraising are not matters of responsibility of the government. This question was about fundraising. It is out of order.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada's air surveillance system is so effective that no plane can fly

Oral Questions

over the country without being detected and tracked. By consulting the flight plan, we can easily deduce whether the plane may have been used to transport prisoners. The media have been reporting on this for nearly a week and the government has been asked some very specific questions in this House on whether planes carrying prisoners have flown over Canadian territory.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness finally answer us with certainty as to whether this is true or not?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will answer clearly, as I have before. I am in possession of no information that would indicate that any plane, civilian or otherwise, has landed in this country that would have participated in the act of extraordinary rendition.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, she has already been given the flight numbers. Refraining from simply answering a clear question is a form of admission.

How is it that a small country of less than 300,000 inhabitants like Iceland knows, but Canada does not? To fly over Iceland from the United States you have to fly over Canada. How is it that this small country dares to express its concern and that the Canadian government prefers to stay in the dark?

When it comes down to it, the minister is refusing to answer us in an attempt to buy time. What does she have to hide?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, as I have made plain, we have no information that any flight has landed in this country that had involvement in relation to the extraordinary act of rendition. As my colleague the Minister of Foreign Affairs made plain, we expect those who come and go from our country and through our airspace to obey both our domestic laws and international laws where appropriate.

Consequently, if we are to come into possession at any time of any information that would raise a concern, I know that my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, would contact his counterpart, the secretary of state.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to our access to information requests, Parliament now knows that the Liberals spent more than \$527 million just on the computer contracts to register seven million guns. That is almost \$100 per gun. Forty million cows were registered for only \$8 million. That is about 25¢ per cow. The gun registry is not doing anything to stop gun and gang violence in Toronto or anywhere else either.

Business of the House

How is it possible for the Liberals to spend more than half a billion dollars on a computer system that should have cost only a fraction of that amount?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he is probably only the hon. member and a few others on that side who think the system does not assist the police in their daily activities.

The former president of the Association of Chiefs of Police said that there was no question that the system works and that it was a valuable tool.

The gun control system improves the screening of legal gun owners, increases their accountability and provides tools to prevent the diversion and misuse of firearms.

Police officers use the firearms registry online more than 5,000 times a day to help them do their work. Since 1998, there have been 4.6 million queries to the system by police. More than 5,400—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty obvious that the minister is trying to equate paper shuffling by bureaucrats with public safety. She is not answering the question. Why does the computer system for guns cost hundreds of times more than that for cows?

The firearms fiasco is starting to make the sponsorship scandal look like a corner store robbery compared to a bank heist.

When will the Liberals quit pouring hundreds of millions of tax dollars into a black hole? When will they stop?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member is not equating the potential lethal nature of a firearm with whatever lethal nature he thinks one of our bovine friends might present to the public.

I was brought up on a farm and let me reassure the hon. member that in all my years on that farm I did not actually encounter a lethal cow.

However, because guns are lethal, that is why we have a gun control system, because we put—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is not for the Minister of Heritage, whom I commend highly for her announcements on culture yesterday in Montreal.

My question is instead for the Minister of the Environment, who has just announced several important aspects of the Green Plan to combat climate change on the eve of the Montreal conference.

Can the Minister of the Environment explain these new initiatives?

[English]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after the partnership that the member and I announced to the government of P.E.I. on wind power this morning, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour announced that with the province of Nova Scotia we will bring that raw gas to downtown Halifax to displace heat and energy from their fossil fuels.

This morning, the Minister of Finance and I and the Minister of Natural Resources announced our support for both carbon capture and clean coal projects with the Government of Saskatchewan.

When Canadians say that they do not want the Conservatives, we will announce a lot of these things that are—

The Speaker: Order, please. It being Thursday, I believe the opposition House leader has a question he would like to ask.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday I ask the government House leader what he has planned for the remainder of today, the government agenda tomorrow and on into next week or at least up until Monday night when the vote will remove the corrupt Liberal government from power.

Furthermore, I would perhaps ask him if he would care to explain to Canadians why, when his Prime Minister had the choice, he is going to put them through an election at Christmas time.

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see the hon. member across the way is displaying his charm once more.

I also think the hon. member understands clearly that the call for the election and, ultimately, if there is an election caused, it will be the opposition members who will have to take responsibility since they will be voting to dissolve Parliament and we will be voting to sustain Parliament in order to continue the work that I will now lay out.

This afternoon we will continue with the opposition motion.

On Friday we will call consideration of the Senate amendments to Bill C-37, the do not call bill; report stage and third reading of Bill S-36 respecting rough diamonds; report stage and third reading of Bill C-63, respecting the Canada Elections Act; and second reading of Bill C-44, the transport legislation.

We will return to this work on Monday, adding to the list the reference before second reading of Bill C-76, the citizenship and adoption bill; and second reading of Bill C-75, the public health agency legislation.

Business of the House

Tuesday and Thursday of next week shall be allotted days. There are some three dozen bills before the House or in committee on which the House I am sure will want to make progress in the next period of time. They will include the bill introduced yesterday to implement the 2005 tax cuts announced on November 14; Bill C-68, the Pacific gateway bill; Bill C-67, the surplus legislation; Bill C-61, the marine bill; Bill C-72, the DNA legislation; Bill C-46, the correctional services bill; Bill C-77, the citizenship prohibitions bill; Bill C-60, the copyright legislation; Bill C-73, the Telecom bill; Bill C-60 respecting drug impaired driving; Bill C-19, the competition legislation; Bill C-50 respecting cruelty to animals; Bill C-51, the judges legislation; Bill C-52, the fisheries bill; Bill C-59 respecting Investment Canada; Bills C-64 and C-65 amending the Criminal Code.

In addition, there are the supplementary estimates introduced in October that provide spending authority for a wide variety of services to the Canadian public and we the government would certainly like to see this passed.

* * *

• (1505)

POINTS OF ORDER

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my exuberance to be understood by the opposition, I was engaging in rather pedestrian language and used the word “lying”. I should have said “an unhealthy use of fallacious data and mendacious behaviour”.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker it is my sad duty to inform the House that there has been a vehicle accident in Afghanistan involving Canadian soldiers that has tragically resulted in four injuries and the death of a Canadian soldier, an unfortunate reminder of the risks that our men and women in uniform undertake on behalf of our country.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of these Canadian Forces members. All next of kin have been notified.

[*Translation*]

I am certain that all hon. members of this House join me in sending our sympathy to the families affected and the victims of this unfortunate accident.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Perhaps the House would care to rise for a moment of silence in memory of the soldier who was killed in Afghanistan.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

VOTE ON BILL C-301

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Mr.

Speaker, I believe the vote that took place in the House last night was misrepresented outside. I would like to bring to the attention of the House that this may even a point of privilege, my privilege as a member in this House, in terms of how I and members on the Liberal side voted last night.

We voted on a section of a particular private member's bill, the private member's bill of the member for Champlain, a member who is now retiring and who we wish a good retirement, which you, Mr. Speaker, had ruled sections 2, 3, 4 and 6, the retroactivity part of that bill, as being out of order. What you said in your judgment when that bill was read for the first time was:

—its provisions would infringe on the financial initiative of the Crown and thus prevent the Chair from putting the question to a vote at third reading.

You did allow the bill to be voted on at second reading. You went on to say that if it were supported at second reading, which is exactly what happened yesterday in this House, it would then proceed to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. That is exactly what was voted on in the House last night.

When the hon. House leader of the Bloc rose last night, the Chair did not point out to the hon. member that was exactly the ruling that took place in this House.

I would like the Chair to reiterate what you had reiterated when that bill was first put, that it could have second reading but not third reading in this House because it was ruled out of order, especially sections 2, 3, 4 and 6, which concerned the retroactivity part of the bill.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in regard to this point of order, I can understand the member trying to save the government's face in this matter. But we must understand one thing. She mentioned that the bill required a royal recommendation. Everyone knows that these are expenditures. This is money that the government took from needy seniors and kept in its own coffers. Everyone knows that this requires a royal recommendation.

However, the member must know as well that with good will and the unanimous consent of all the parties in the House, Parliament is master of all bills and could have passed this one. The government could have given the royal recommendation and, in this way, there would have been justice and fairness for seniors. But that was not done.

Her attempt is in vain because everyone now knows that those people have two faces, the one they show in public and another when it comes time to act.

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos: Mr. Speaker, I really think that the hon. member is being dishonest when he says that we have two faces.

We should say exactly what happened in this House. No one is against seniors. On the contrary, it is the government that introduced legislation in this regard. We did all we could to get assistance.

Supply

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos: You never listen.

I know you do not have any respect for this decision, but the point of order was that one—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos: Yes, you do not have any respect and you do not have any respect for the members either. Yesterday you said that the Quebec members said no. Not one member from Quebec said no yesterday. I wanted to say that too.

I would like a clarification, Mr. Speaker. We voted yesterday to ensure that this bill would be sent to committee. We were ready to send it to committee, but it is the Bloc that wants an election, not us.

The Speaker: We really have a debate here. There was a request for unanimous consent to continue with this bill in two phases. That was refused. Even if we had got consent, it was impossible for the Speaker to put the question at third reading without a royal recommendation. This is a constitutional requirement. In my view, it is not necessary to continue this debate at the present time.

The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster has the floor on another point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, this morning during routine proceedings I had the privilege of hosting a delegation of Chinese agricultural people. That meeting ran a little long so I missed the routine proceedings.

I have a report to table from the agricultural committee. I would ask for unanimous consent from the House to return to reports from committees so I could do that at this time.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to revert to presenting reports from committees?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, on the current World Trade Organization negotiations.

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POINTS OF ORDER

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not wish to belabour this point but I would ask that you reserve the right to take a look at *Hansard* and the apology or so-called apology from the Minister of Citizenship

and Immigration. He unequivocally called my colleague from Simcoe—Grey a liar. I think that is quite serious. The nature of his apology, such as it was, I think is completely unacceptable. Upon review I think you would ask that he apologize properly to my colleague and to the House.

• (1515)

The Speaker: I will examine the words that the member used. They were not all one might have expected in terms of an apology. I thought the word was retracted and others substituted, but I will, at the request of the House leader for the official opposition, have a look at *Hansard* and get back to members if necessary.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION — CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I should inform you that I will use only half of my allotted time, that is ten minutes, because I will be sharing it with my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord, who will no doubt enrich this debate.

That said, the question we are asking ourselves today, to which the public deserves an answer, is this: For what fundamental reason does Parliament want to withdraw confidence from the government opposite?

I was not planning to open my speech with that, but we were just provided with a perfect illustration of how completely morally bankrupt this government is. Let me explain.

This is a point that the hon. member wanted to address. Last night, the government showed up in this chamber. After years of work, demanding on behalf of seniors that they receive the GIS, denouncing the complicated forms issued by the government, which was purposely depriving dozens and dozens of our most vulnerable seniors of this supplement, my colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain introduced a bill. This is a goal he pursued throughout his career. This bill was asking that government show some humanity. It was asking that it stop squandering money right and left and making countless announcements of all sorts, as we are used to it doing at the beginning of every election campaign, and instead, that it take the time to render justice to the most disadvantaged in our society: seniors who need the guaranteed income supplement.

The bill on which the House worked was adopted at second reading. While all hon. members of this House were in favour of this bill, we have seen how uncomfortable that made the government, which has for years been denying retroactive payments to those seniors deprived of money they were owed.

Supply

Why was the government uncomfortable? Because it will have to face the people very soon, as Parliament will by all accounts be passing a vote of non-confidence. The members of the government therefore realized that they will have to meet with senior citizens and admit that they opposed this bill whose purpose was to treat seniors fairly. A wave of panic swept over the other side.

People are entitled to know these things. When all parties supported the bill put forward by my colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain to ensure full retroactivity for senior citizens, the Liberals opposite had no idea what to do. The word then went around that they were going to stand up and vote in favour of the bill, as if they truly agreed with it.

This would allow them to go into an election campaign and tell all the senior citizens that they were in agreement and had voted in favour of the bill. That is what they tried to say yesterday. However, they thought that it was not going to go any farther because it was only second reading and Parliament was going to be dissolved. The Liberals' reputation would be left intact. They would be able to convince senior citizens that they were going to agree to the Bloc's demands.

We tricked them. We know that Parliament can do anything here. It is a matter of being on the same page and deciding unanimously to work on a bill. There was unanimous consent for Bills C-53, C-54, C-55 and C-66, and for the ways and means motion and there will undoubtedly be other bills that merit unanimous consent between now and the end of the session. When we want to, we can do anything.

I stood up and said there was unanimous consent. The Bloc has been demanding justice for senior citizens for a long time now so it is clear the Bloc agrees. The Conservatives and the New Democratic Party agreed as well, and—miracle of miracles—because they wanted to save face, the Liberals gave their support. People are entitled to know these things. Since there was unanimity, the Bloc therefore sought the unanimous consent of the House to vote at third reading on the bill put forward by my colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain and finally be fair to senior citizens, the most disadvantaged segment of our society.

• (1520)

No one on the other side stood up to talk about royal assent. There was panic, and the Liberal MPs cried no because they were suddenly being forced to assume their responsibilities and see through what they had undertaken to do on second reading. They were exposed.

I call that a government with no morals. This is what people can no longer abide in Liberals from Quebec and the rest of Canada. People are fed up hearing a message that does not reflect careful thought and concrete action. The government says one thing but thinks the opposite. I call that hypocritical, and this government has shattered the record for hypocrisy.

Take the Gomery report. I will give another example of this unmatched level of hypocrisy. The government said it created this sweeping Gomery inquiry and that when the report was tabled the sponsorship issue would be considered resolved. The government says it highlighted two consequences of the Gomery report: first, the judge cleared the Prime Minister of any wrongdoing, and second, the

Liberal Party cleaned house. Let us see what the real implications are.

After numerous questions have been asked in this House, the government keeps repeating that Judge Gomery stated that the former Minister of Finance, the current Prime Minister, did not have the ability to monitor the government's expenditures day after day. It is true that he wrote that. Let us stop there, however. They say that he cleared the Prime Minister of any wrongdoing, but they forget to mention that Judge Gomery also wrote, a few pages further on, that Treasury Board had abdicated its responsibilities, that it was as if it longer existed, that it had not applied the rules nor kept track of the money as it should have done.

It must be remembered that the current Prime Minister was at that time the vice-president of the Treasury Board. The members on the other side avoid mentioning that. They have two different stories. The Liberals always leave in what is to their advantage and leave aside half or three quarters of the truth when it does not suit them. That is why people want no more of this government.

They say the Liberal Party has cleaned house. The Prime Minister has indeed announced the suspension for life of 10 people. How splendid. We are talking about 10 bad Liberals who received dirty money. They suspended the one who collected the money, and we approve of this decision. They suspended the one who carried the money, and we also approve of this decision. They did not, however, suspend those who received the money and who got elected with the help of the dirty money that certain people slipped into their pockets. They are still good Liberals.

That is the reason people want no more of this government. They can no longer stand having a government devoid of any sense of morality, a government that tells only a small fraction of the truth, a government that always finds a turn of phrase to get itself off the hook, whereas the reality is quite a different story. That is what we call a government devoid of morality, a government that we want no more of.

Let us indulge in some political fiction and imagine that I have the good fortune to work for an advertising agency that gives advice to the Liberal Party for the next election. There is not the slightest possibility that this will ever happen because, as we know, the Liberals only hire their friends. Nonetheless, if that were the case, I would not keep the slogan proposed by the member for Honoré-Mercier, the president of the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada. His slogan is not polite: "Hold your nose and vote Liberal." I do not think it does them justice. In any event, if I worked in the communications field, I would avoid this slogan and propose one on a fine red background: "Vote Liberal—or With the Liberal Party—your money at our service". That is the slogan of the Liberal Party: our money at its service. And we want no more of it.

• (1525)

Hon. Diane Marleau (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the hon. member. He is so angry and insulted. I wonder why he has so much fire in his belly. I can tell you that I am proud to be a Liberal. I am proud to be a member of a party that is here for the entire country, that is here to build an important and successful country.

Supply

We have here the Bloc party, an eternal opposition party that can do nothing but oppose everything. That is what we hear. We, the Liberals, want to convince Quebecers that Canada can work, that we can do many things together and that we will continue to do so.

Nonetheless, with all their fine speeches, I really want to know what this party can do for French Canadians throughout the country other than criticize, blither, yell and trigger an election that people do not really want at this time.

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I would not want to hurt the former minister's feelings, but she missed a thing or two. Let me give an example. The Bloc Québécois never opposed a government measure without proposing a credible alternative.

Let us take the example of softwood lumber, since the member finds this very funny. We will try to inform her. From the outset of the softwood lumber crisis, the Bloc Québécois, without waiting to find out what the government was going to do, proposed a comprehensive action plan that took into consideration affected workers, as well as small and large companies in the forest industry. In addition to the measures dealing with workers and small companies, one proposal involved loan guarantees.

For five years, the Bloc Québécois has kept telling the government that, in order to deal with the crisis affecting the industry, an aid plan and loan guarantees were necessary. The government never acknowledged that. Now, it is rushing to put in place a small loan guarantee program at the last minute, because everyone is asking for such a program, because the industry is crying for help, and because hundreds of jobs are disappearing in our region. Why? Because this government would not listen.

The Bloc Québécois had proposed a credible solution, a solution approved by the industry and supported by everyone, except the Liberals, who are the holders of the truth. However, over the last number of months, they have lost touch with the people, and this is why people are now distancing themselves from the Liberals.

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are well aware—and we have mentioned this on numerous occasions—that the Government of Canada has made a mockery of democracy. I think that it has ignored the public, both in terms of departmental responsibility and democracy. Its time is up.

We also know that the Liberal government specializes in scandals: human resources, firearms and the sponsorships. Furthermore, we learn that this government is insensitive. There is child poverty. We talked earlier about preventive withdrawal, and now about seniors. So, as the House leader of the Bloc Québécois just said, this is a government that has no morals, it is heartless.

I have a question for the member. Now that we know the public's verdict, what would be an appropriate sentence for this government?

• (1530)

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, if the member belonged to a different political party, I would say that he is being kind in giving me a few minutes of the House's time to tell the public and the members here what sentence the government deserves.

Let us go category by category. If I were a senior and I knew that I had been done out of thousands of dollars because the government

did not want to make my benefits retroactive, I would fire the Liberals.

If I were a worker in the regions dealing with casual jobs and the springtime black hole because the government raided the EI fund and did not listen to my demands, I would fire the government.

If I were a worker caught in the softwood lumber crisis because the government refused to listen to me, I would fire it.

If I worked in the textile industry, which the government did not want to help and assist in any way whatsoever, I would fire the government.

Everyone wants to fire this government. All we need is time. In five weeks, we will fire this government.

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I may not have the eloquence of my colleague, but I think we all have a lot to say today.

There is great nervousness on the other side of the House, and I think that they may be afraid that they are going to make a wrong move and find themselves in opposition. That would perhaps do them some good, however, for it would allow them to clean up their party.

I have been here for 12 years and the Liberal Party has been in power all that time. During that time, I have seen scandal after scandal. As far as the sponsorship scandal is concerned, we are criticized for focussing only on what suits us in the Gomery commission report. Judge Gomery himself says the following, which I will quote, as it is important that people remember it:

The Commission of Inquiry found: clear evidence of political involvement in the administration of the Sponsorship Program [...]

Judge Gomery said it, not us. He also noted the existence of a "culture of entitlement"—this is something that is said every day here, in the House of Commons—"among political officials and bureaucrats involved with the Sponsorship Program, including the receipt of monetary and non-monetary benefits". We are not the ones who said that. The Gomery commission said that "the Liberal Government had betrayed the people". We are not the ones who said that either.

For the past 12 years, the Bloc Québécois and other opposition parties have been trying to find solutions to things and make changes to benefit the people. We have been working for 12 years to save people, to help the unemployed, pregnant women and nursing mothers. On this subject, a bill was unanimously approved yesterday on second reading. And what is the government going to do with it? Its response is appalling.

I have heard some things today. I am very familiar with this bill, as I introduced it in turn, and another of my colleagues also did so. We will introduce it again and again in the House of Commons until it is passed. This bill should be included in part II of the Canada Labour Code, which covers occupational health and safety. That is where it belongs. And then we are told today that part III is to be revised and that it will be looked at after that.

That makes no sense. The government always postpones things when we know full well that it will do nothing. We know very well that it will not move on this, but we will not give up, we will continue to prod them constantly.

A pregnant woman has the right to bring a child into the world in good health, and these few weeks can be of the utmost, vital importance for the women and for their babies. People are no longer having children. Would it not be possible to allow pregnant women to have a child—since they have maybe one, sometimes two—and to experience this precious moment in their lives as they should? The government refuses to grant them that. It wants to do nothing; it prefers to squander our money.

As far as the employment insurance fund is concerned, what they have done with it is unbelievable. They refloated the Liberal Party, they refloated the government with the money from the fund. They used this money to give it to others, whereas the employment insurance fund should be for the benefit of the unemployed. That has not happened. They have reduced the number of hours and the percentage of income. Let us imagine ourselves unemployed. It is no joke. It is difficult, as you have to take the time to find a new job and do the necessary research.

We see textile industry plants closing their doors, one after the other, and jobs being lost in softwood lumber. Are these workers going to find another job the next morning? They need employment insurance benefits. But on the other side of the House, they turn a deaf ear. These people do not count. My colleague spoke about a guaranteed minimum income. That is a priority.

Not many poor people know what it means to have \$5,000 in one's pocket. They have never had that. They work for minimum wage and earn around \$8,000 a year. Imagine them getting retroactive payments. Then they might be entitled to about \$5,000 at most. Would that not help a little bit? These are people who paid into employment insurance all their lives. They paid employment insurance premiums and taxes. Now they are told no, because the government is too cowardly to wake up and do something for them. This is unacceptable.

I can say for sure that we will not be afraid to talk about it during the election campaign. Nor will we be afraid to say how hypocritical they have been with this. They voted in favour of a bill and then they try to make us believe that they could not have done anything afterward.

• (1535)

Where there is a will, there is a way. We have done it for other bills here. We have negotiated and reached agreements with the government. All the parties, whether the Conservative Party, the Bloc or the NDP, have agreed to comprise so that bills could pass, and this one should have passed. The government is hiding behind anything at all so that it does not have to face up to its responsibilities. It is a disgrace.

As I was just saying, the Liberals should spend a little time in the opposition. Then people could go and see them and tell them that they are living in dire poverty and need help. But no, it is not the Liberals who see these people but we. These people come to see us and speak with us in our offices. They are furious with Liberal

Supply

policy. They hate having millions and millions of dollars stolen from them and given to friendly companies. Not only that, the money is then given back to the party to keep it going. It is indecent and unacceptable. It can never be said enough, and we will continue to repeat it.

The sponsorship scandal is not all of it. The firearms issue, too, will be huge. A budget of \$2 million was allocated for the gun registry. How much has it cost? Two billion dollars, and the meter is still running. Where did the money go? What happened? We asked the Auditor General to look into the matter, to do a study, investigate—to be sure, it was not the government that made the request—and she will be reporting to us in February. Who knows what she will find. Think of what we could do with that \$2 billion. How many people and small businesses could we help? The Liberals do not care about that.

It is odd: barely three weeks ago, we were told that there was no money left. All of a sudden, billions of dollars are dropping from the sky. The promises made this past week total \$20 billion. Where is this money coming from? It is coming from the unemployed and the employment insurance fund, because the money is not being put back where it should go. The employment insurance fund should be increased and made fully autonomous. I guarantee my colleagues that until that happens, we will be fighting for fairness and justice. That is not the case right now; the fund is controlled by a small clique that makes decisions on its own without taking people's real needs into account. Liberal politicians are out of touch with the real world. We, however, are still in touch and will remain in touch. We want to continue helping people in need who pay taxes. Everyone pays taxes except those who cannot afford to, and that is a good thing.

These people have the right to speak and will have their say come the next election. Their message will be loud and clear. The Liberals can quit blaming us for wanting to have an election during the holidays. On Monday, they had the chance to vote with us and pass a motion that allowed the government to call an election after Christmas, on January 4, for a vote in mid-February. They declined that offer. It will be their fault if an election is held during the holidays. That is what we will keep telling the public.

• (1540)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about integrity and abuse of democracy.

I believe that all those who have the honour of sitting in this House, who are paid by it, have a duty to respect and accept the laws that they pass in this chamber. Even though we may not always agree with these laws, if we are paid by Canadian taxpayers, by the Parliament of Canada, we have a duty to accept them.

Consequently, would rejecting out of hand the Clarity Act not be an abuse of democracy? This act was passed by the House, by all the members of this House, by individuals who came to sit in Ottawa and who, because of that, gave legitimacy to this House. This is my question for the hon. member. Do we not have a duty to respect this act and not reject it out of hand?

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, I thought we were debating a confidence motion today.

Supply

Quebec will make its decision, we will cross that bridge when we get to it. It will be a political decision and Quebec will manage this issue.

In the meantime, we will not lick anyone's boots here. We will always and forever protect our voters' best interests. We deserve our salary, and we will continue to deserve it to the very end. The same cannot be said of certain people.

Be that as it may, we, Bloc members, will definitely work very hard here, and we will truly represent our voters. We will work for them, and we will try to improve their situation through various bills and acts. We will table motions in the House to try to improve the situation of our fellow citizens.

I would like members opposite to pay more attention to those citizens who are in need, and to sometime take the initiative of drafting legislation designed to help these people.

What will the member do with the guaranteed income supplement? What will he do about the seniors in his riding who need it? Will he ignore them? Will he avoid them? This is what is important: to remain in touch with the reality and with our people, and to represent them here with dignity and honesty.

Hon. Diane Marleau (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what hypocrisy are we hearing from the perennial-opposition party. Even the most long term supporters of the Bloc Québécois wonder what they are doing by supporting the ultra-right Conservative Party.

I will read excerpts from an open letter from Father Raymond Gravel, parish priest at Saint-Joachim-de-la-Plaine and chaplain of the Laval police brotherhood. This was written last March.

Father Gravel starts by declaring himself a "member of the Bloc Québécois since its inception and a sovereignist in heart and soul". He says he could not believe his eyes when the leader of the Bloc Québécois espoused the cause of the leader of the Conservatives.

Here is an excerpt from his letter:

—what is there in it for the Bloc Québécois to support the Conservatives in order to defeat the government of (here he names the Prime Minister)? If it is just to get two or three more MPs elected in Quebec, this is sheer opportunism.

One cannot but agree with that comment. Father Gravel is right.

I wonder how the members of the Bloc can look their fellow citizens in the eye and tell them they are supporting an ultra-right party, which is totally contrary to the values of Quebec and of Canada.

• (1545)

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, there is a fault of logic here somewhere. If what she says is true, we would never have voted with the government, as we have done on numerous occasions.

When something is good for Quebec, fine, we vote with the government. She is well aware of that. This is nothing but petty politics, and I will not get involved in it.

I can sense the frustrations on the other side of the House and I can understand them. It is tough, they are going to go through some

tough times in the weeks to come. That is life. It is the same for everybody.

In conclusion, I would like the hon. members across the way to do some thinking. We will soon all be out on the hustings. I hope that, when they are talking with their fellow citizens, they will not just be mouthing pleasantries but will be finding out what is going on with them, in order to represent them properly.

[*English*]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Medicine Hat and speak to the non-confidence motion moved by my leader and seconded by the leader of the New Democratic Party. The motion affirms and reaffirms that the Conservative Party is withdrawing its support for the government. I want to speak to why we are doing that.

Much has been said in this place in the last while about Judge Gomery, about his report on the sponsorship program and the levels of dishonesty and corruption that he found. In fact, he named the Liberal Party in his report. That is certainly a very damning indictment when it comes to a scandal that saw \$100 million stolen from the taxpayers of Canada.

However, I want to talk about something other than just the culture of entitlement. I want to talk about the culture of press releases and announcements, a culture of feeling their pain without getting any results for Canadians.

The other side of all this, of what we have been through in the last year, such as the Gomery report and the sponsorship scandal, is the fact that the government has had 12 years to resolve big problems that grip the country today and they have not been resolved.

I feel very comfortable standing here and speaking on behalf of my constituents when I say that Canadians deserve better. They deserve better than these vague assurances and spending announcements without plans, these press conferences, things that are designed to take important issues off the front burner, put them on the back burner for a little while and let them disappear from public view. We see this over and over again. Canadians deserve a lot better.

What we are seeing are the final death throes of a government that is tired and out of steam. It resorts to taking shortcuts in the end, throwing all this money out of the back of the truck, hoping Canadians will be duped into voting for the government again based on a bunch of announcements. People need more than announcements. They cannot eat an announcement. They cannot drink a press release. People need some real results, and I want to talk about that.

I want to underline this by giving a few hard examples. One that comes to mind is something that I talked to somebody about the other day. I said, "Did you know that you are the recipient of the largest tax cut in Canadian history?" The person did not know what I was talking about. That is my point. The government runs around claiming that it gave Canadians the largest tax cut in Canadian history, but people cannot see it on their paycheques.

We are talking about real results, not a bunch of spin or press releases with the government saying that it is going to do something. People want something that makes a difference in their lives. It is amazing that the government's claim of \$100 billion in tax relief has never shown up on anybody's paycheque. There are very good reasons for that. The \$100 billion was not really \$100 billion, and it was offset by tax hikes with the other hand.

My point in saying all of this is that people are tired of this. They do not want the spin any more. What they want are real results. They do not want to rhetoric.

I am splitting my time, Mr. Speaker, with the member for Niagara Falls.

The government, on the eve of an election, has brought down its third budget in nine months. I am sure it is a record. I have never heard of that. On the eve of an election, it has decided it wants to reduce taxes by \$30 billion. The last time it was \$100 billion and people never felt the impact of that one. This time it is \$30 billion and probably we will end up owing the government money. The point is that we are not seeing the results.

The other example I want to give is that in the last five years, spending has gone up 48%. We spend \$50 billion a year more today than we did five years ago, but where are the results?

• (1550)

We have looked at the issue of health care. A dozen years ago, when the it came to power, the government said that health care was its number one priority. Today, a dozen years later, waiting lists for acute and critical health care has doubled, even though we spend all that much more money.

Another example is we have this massive ramp up in spending for all these services. Today it takes much longer to deal with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration than it did a few years ago. The government has put all this money into that department.

In 1997 the government spent about \$18 billion a year to provide salaries and compensation to the public service. Today it is well over \$30 billion. The spending has gone through the roof. It now takes longer than ever to get government services from the public service. People are not getting results. That is the bottom line for the public. Canadians do not mind paying taxes if they get results.

There are many other examples to which I could point. I could talk about the firearms registry and the sponsorship program, how the government threw money at a problem. There were no results except bad results. We got not only corruption and scandal, but we also saw a huge rise in support for separatism in Quebec. The government blew that one completely.

I could talk about Davis Inlet, which I have talked about many times in this place. The government threw a bunch of money at a problem, \$360 million for 900 people, or \$400,000 a person. What did we get? All the problems were moved to a new location. Canadians are not getting results.

Let us talk about something that is very current. Not long ago the government came under tremendous fire for the situation in Kashachewan. Natives on that reserve were forced to live through

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a boil water order for a very long period of time. The government built a water filtration plant that did not meet provincial standards. The government could not even count on its own water system, even though it had spent millions of dollars to bring this about.

The Prime Minister has said this is his number one priority. I guess he has many number one priorities. Everything seems to be his number one priority. He said that 12 years had not been enough time to deal with this issue. Now we need 12 years and five months to deal with the issue. This is simply ridiculous. It is time for the government to yield to a new government that has a vision for the country, a government that believes in results over rhetoric.

My leader and the Conservative Party are committed to the country. We love it and we want to see it become an even better country than it is today.

We have a lot of problems in the country. We can fix those problems and we can do it, working cooperatively with other parties. We have done that over the last year and a half in this minority Parliament. We are prepared to do that, if we end up in a minority situation again. The Conservative Party is prepared to work with other parties. We believe in democracy. We will ensure that people have the right to stand up for their constituents and represent them in this place. That is part of the commitment of the Conservative Party.

We believe Canadians should have opportunities. We believe the government has an obligation to bring about an economy that ensures all Canadians have opportunities. Not just because it means giving people jobs and raising their living standards, but because it means more revenue for the government so it can provide for those who cannot help themselves. Canada should be the most prosperous country in the world, so we can also be the most generous country in the world. That will happen under a Conservative Party.

We have a vision for the country that will bring these things about. What we are asking for today, in moving this motion, is that we defeat the government and bring it to an end and clear the path for an election so we can engage Canadians in a great debate about where this country should go. Ultimately, we will ask for the support of Canadians to wipe the Liberal government away. If I were a Liberal, I would ask that this happen. Then I could start all over again with a new crew at the top who have some ideas and vision.

Canadians deserve better. For my friend across the way who is heckling, he will have lots of time to heckle when he is in the opposition.

• (1555)

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with the speech of my colleague from Medicine Hat. He hit the nail on the head. The Liberals over the years have thrived on announcements. They love announcements and announcing. They will announce the same money once, twice, three times, four times and then they will re-announce it. Meanwhile, the Liberals are travelling around the country on government jets announcing their money, taxpayer money. I commend my colleague for pointing this fact out to us and to Canadians around the country.

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Could my colleague go a bit further on this topic and indicate exactly what kind of financial and fiscal responsibility a new integrity bound Conservative government would give the country?

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to answer that question. I think it is important to give Canadians the best Christmas gift of all, a new government, and I can say that the very first commitment the Conservatives will make when it comes to the finances of the nation is to ensure that we have clean government and that people's money is spent properly. My leader has made a commitment to bring in as his first piece of legislation an accountability act that would put severe limits on lobbying and buying access to public officials.

It is, of course, born out of what we have seen come out of Justice Gomery's report. It has won overwhelming support from those people who are committed to trying to clean this up, from groups like Democracy Watch and others, who are as concerned as anybody about the slide of this country toward the sort of unsavoury government that we see in other parts of the world. We do not need to go there. Canadians deserve better than that.

Therefore, the first point I would make is that we would put that accountability act in place to ensure that we have independent officers of Parliament to oversee the actions of government and make sure that they are not motivated solely by politics and personal gain. That is a very important point.

The second point I would make is that Conservatives understand that one can never have a government or a standard of living or a society rise above the ability of one's economy to generate wealth. This is why we would move very vigorously to remove the barriers that stand in the way of entrepreneurs, farmers and small business people who are trying to create jobs and better their lives so they can look after their families.

My leader and I have spent the last number of months sitting down with groups representing small business, farmers, fishermen and people who are frustrated by the barriers that stand in their way today because we have an unresponsive federal government that will not do anything about these things. We will be releasing in great detail exactly how we will remove some of those barriers, propel these groups forward, and give them an opportunity to raise their own standard of living to create jobs and really bring about the type of success that I think we should have in this country.

I think it is an insult to Canadians that Canada is not today the most prosperous country in the world. We have an extraordinarily wealthy country in terms of natural resources, human resources and access to the most wealthy market in the world, but we are not allowed to exploit it because of these artificial barriers that government has put in place over a period of years. It is time to knock those barriers down. It is time to ensure that Canadians are better off. That will not happen with a tired, out of steam Liberal government.

• (1600)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate on the non-confidence motion proposed by the Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the leader of the New Democratic Party, which simply says that the House does not have confidence in the government.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you have an encyclopedic memory of Canadian history. I am not quite sure when a clear question like this, certainly a successful one, was last put to the House of Commons. It seems to me that most of the time governments collapse as a result of an amendment to a budget. I believe one collapsed in 1979. Certainly a budget is a confidence measure, but this is a very clear question.

For those of us who are prepared to support this, I think it is important to enumerate why we think this government should be removed from office. I realize I only have 10 minutes, which is somewhat confining, but be that as it may, I am pleased to be able to touch on a couple of points.

One of those points is the complete lack of leadership by the government in and its mismanagement of our relationship with the United States. I am not alone in believing that the Prime Minister has bungled this very important relationship.

I found it of passing interest yesterday to notice the headline in the *Ottawa Citizen*, which stated, "Report blames PM for chilled U.S. relations: Ex-ambassador cites 'erratic' policy, 'knee-jerk' anti-American reactions". If I may, I will read the first paragraph, which states:

The biggest barrier to improved relations with the United States is the "uncertain, erratic policy stewardship" of [the] Prime Minister and his ministers, says a former Canadian ambassador to the United States.

I could not agree more, and those of us who live right on the border are the ones who feel this immediately.

I remember speaking earlier in this Parliament about the problems that we have at our bridges. Somebody said that of course we have a lot of bridges in Niagara so of course I would be concerned. What I said was, "Yes, it is an important local issue, but I am concerned because it affects Canada nationally". If Canada's bridges do not work, then all of Canada will suffer.

Mr. Speaker, you know and I know and the members of the government should know that people who make decisions about investments do not just make those decisions for what they think is going to happen in the next couple of months; they make them for the next five or ten years. This is why I believe it is absolutely critical that the government deal with some of the issues that touch Canada's borders.

There has been an infrastructure program. In fairness, members will note in *Hansard* that I agree with money being put into infrastructure. I can say that I was not very happy when I was told there was no extra money for border guards in the Niagara area, as we have four bridges, but nonetheless, I applaud any money that goes into this area. But this is only one part of the problem.

One of the problems is the question of capacity. It has taken this government an inordinately great amount of time to make a decision in some of these areas. I noticed recently that the government is finally starting to move ahead in the Windsor area. I asked the Liberals what took them so long. How much traffic, how many traffic jams, how much of a backup, how much of a slowdown in commerce does it take before the government realizes that we need increased capacity? I see that some tentative steps have been made in the Windsor area, but we in the Niagara area are still waiting.

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I have brought up this matter before with respect to the Peace Bridge and the Fort Erie crossing. There is an application to put in a new bridge. The Peace Bridge Authority is proposing to double the span. When is the government going to step forward? At this point, I have told people that they will now have to wait for a Conservative government to make these decisions because it is obvious that the Liberals are not going to do that.

With respect to the passport initiative, I have been urging the government to make this a higher profile matter with our colleagues in the United States. A proposal is before the United States Congress right now that would require those returning to the United States to have a passport or other secure document.

• (1605)

I have been to Washington twice on this issue. I talked to the commissioner for U.S. customs and I pointed out to him what a difficult thing this will be and what a chilling effect this will have on tourism. He asked what the problem was, saying that the program was not going to be coming in for a couple of years. I pointed out to him that the problem is now: people think they need this extra documentation now when they enter Canada and when they return to the United States. I have pointed out to them and to the government that we need action on this now. It is hurting tourism in Canada, in the Niagara area in southern Ontario and certainly across the country right now. The government has to make this a higher priority.

I have pointed out to the government as well that it has relied on the Niagara regional police for much of the security along the Niagara River. I have encouraged the government to do something and put more resources into security. That will allay some of the fears of our friends in the United States. I have told people on this issue as well as others that a Conservative government will do better.

On the question of agriculture, we heard what was in this third budget. Did we hear anything about agriculture? There was nothing there. There were all kinds of spending announcements, but some of the things we have been talking about are completely absent. On a number of occasions I have pointed out the CAIS program to the government. I have asked the government why it does not take some leadership, make changes and make it better for the farmers of this country. For the most part, the response is, “Well, the provinces are involved with this and it is very complicated but certainly we are looking into it”. That is not good enough for the farmers of this country.

I pointed out to the Minister of Agriculture not long ago that one of the problems we are having at the Canada-U.S. border is the fact that the words “no sugar added” cannot be used on fruit juices. The Canadian companies comply with that. They have an understandable complaint when they tell me that foreign companies are shipping fruit juices into this country and using the term “no sugar added”. I asked why there is a double standard. The Canada Border Services Agency says it does not have the resources to police this. Again I say to give farmers a break in this country. Let us help the people who produce these fruits.

My colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook and I have introduced a bill in the House to reduce the excise tax on wine. What we are proposing would cost the government less than \$10 million. It has made billions of dollars of announcements. I noticed

that yesterday the *Ottawa Sun* said the government was “dishing out more than \$4 billion yesterday alone”. Could we not have had a little bit for the Canadian wine industry? Would that have been so bad?

It is not just the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook and I who have been pushing this. The finance committee of the House of Commons has unanimously endorsed the idea. Members of the Liberal Party sitting there want their own government to do this. Again, I am at a point where now I am voting for this motion and I have to tell people a Conservative government will make this a priority. We all know the responsibilities of the member for Medicine Hat in the area of finance. Let me tell members this: as soon as there is a Conservative government, I am going to be knocking on his door. I am going to say, “Put this in. Make this happen. This would be a tremendous benefit to the Canadian wine industry”.

There are many reasons to have the government moved out. Certainly the Gomery commission is one of them. It is a national disgrace. Anyone who listened to it saw the litany of kickbacks, fraud and illegal election spending. That last is one of the things that irritates me the most. For every election I run in, I tell my campaign manager to be very careful. Last time, I sat down with my campaign manager, Mr. Jim Craig, and told him, “Please, spend less than the amount to make sure that we are in complete compliance”. Just in case we missed something along the line, I thought, we would still be well within the limits.

As we found out, though, all kinds of illegal dirty money was going into the last couple of elections, apparently at the behest of the Liberal Party. I thought to myself how unfair that must have been for candidates who were honest, for people who abided by the rules. How did they like finding out later on that the fix was in and all kinds of dirty money was going in to make sure they did not have a chance? That is not what this democracy is all about.

I think we can do better. I remember the words of the late John Diefenbaker, a great Conservative prime minister, who said that he and his party could build a country from the Atlantic to the Pacific with “equal opportunity for all and special privileges for none”.

• (1610)

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to be heading into an election and there is much unfinished business in the House that is going to end. We were doing lots of work in the citizenship and immigration committee.

We have legislation that is not going to pass, but let me say this to the member opposite. I really believe that most of my colleagues are honourable members. The discourse that has taken place over Gomery does no credit to any one of us. It hurts the credibility of the democratic system.

Before I came to Parliament, I used to be in crime prevention. I used to work at Youth in Conflict with the Law. I can say to all members that there is not a segment of society that is not touched by some bad apples. That is why we have a judicial system. That is why we have police and that is why we have prisons. In cases where people have broken trust, that is where they belong.

Supply

I mentioned to the House that no party has the corner on honesty. We all have some people who will do things that neither party in this House would approve. If the Conservatives really want to look at a scandal, all they have to do is pick up a copy of *On the Take: Crime, Corruption and Greed in the Mulroney Years*. If they want to look at specific members of their party who are brought into question by this book, they do not have to look further than page 314 which names the deputy leader of the Conservative Party.

I do not take any satisfaction in this. I think what we are doing is hurting the democratic process. Allan Gregg, who used to be a Conservative, wrote a rather good column entitled "Get a grip, Canada"—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Niagara Falls.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I would not mind commenting on that. This is exactly the problem. The Liberals never take responsibility for what has happened under their watch. They say that somebody else must have done something somewhere else. That is not an excuse.

Never once have we heard an apology. How about just a simple apology to candidates who were honest and found themselves up against money that the Gomery commission exposed? That is the problem I have with that.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my colleague from Niagara Falls. He has been incredibly hardworking and I appreciate his comments today. He is even being praised by the Liberal candidate that is coming up. I have heard of the hard work of the member even from the Liberals. I do have a question for him and it relates to his comments on border security and the need for border guards.

The Deputy Prime Minister made an announcement last summer that there were going to be 247 new border guards over five years, which works out to be less than 50 new guards per year for all the border crossings. Would my colleague comment on that? With limited numbers like that, what kind of impact is that going to have for our national security and our borders?

• (1615)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, certainly, I welcome any increase. I want more and I want them in the Niagara area.

Quite frankly, there are labour issues concerning our border guards that have not been settled and I have raised this matter in the House. We have had five work stoppages in the Niagara area. I know other members across the country are experiencing this problem. I raised the matter in question period and the Deputy Prime Minister said that the government had determined that this was not a safety-related problem and that the guards had to go back to work.

I do not think that is good enough. There is a problem here and the government should settle it. Unfortunately, at this point, the government is not going to settle it, but I can promise those individuals that the next government will.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly pleased to participate in this debate, because it is basically pointless. We have to ask ourselves, "How did it come to this?" A mere 18 months after general elections that cost Canadians

some \$250 million, the opposition puts forward a non-confidence motion. Why?

Of course, the first reason is because the opposition was frustrated with the result of the last elections. Then, we have to look at why we are finding ourselves in this situation. One of the reasons is because we did not give in to the blackmail of the New Democratic Party, which overestimated its capacity. There comes a time when a government has to govern and assume its responsibilities, and when a third or fourth party has to accept to get a certain number of votes and no more. There is no reason to give in to blatant blackmail.

There is another reason for pushing for elections. Naturally, the Bloc Québécois is prepared to support any motion of non-confidence because its goal is to destabilize Canada. What better way than to have elections in a rush, as this will have the effect of paralyzing the Canadian state for several months at a time when very urgent issues have to be dealt with? The Bloc's behaviour is not surprising. It does not want this Parliament to work. Worse yet, and voters need to know this, the leader of the Bloc Québécois said he would not hesitate to defeat another minority Liberal government immediately after the next elections. In other words, whatever the scenario, the Bloc does not want Parliament to work because it does not want Canada to work.

How can we fathom that the Conservative Party would accept to be a part of that? There can be only one reason. Otherwise, why the rush? Conservative members and supporters tell me they are in a rush because their leader may not make it through. What we have there, then, is essentially a motion from the leader of the Conservative Party, who is afraid of being challenged from within his party. That has nothing to do with the public interest of Canada.

One of them has delusions of grandeur; one of the parties wants to destabilize the country; and one leader is running ahead of the pack for fear his supporters will catch up with him, because they realize he is headed for defeat. The Conservative leader figured that before he was pushed aside, he would give it at least one last try.

Now we are having an election at a time when things are going extremely well in the country, when we are the only G-7 country to have a budgetary surplus. Just imagine, the great debate in Canada is how to spend our surplus. That is a debate every country in the world would dream of having. They would all dream of having a discussion on how to share the budgetary surplus. We are the only country with this problem of wealth.

In the meantime, let us look at why our public finances are in order and why we have a sense of economic security in Canada. It is because we have a competent team. One of the key people responsible for the state of our public finances is our Prime Minister. He was at the helm for many years and rescued the ship that was sinking under the Conservatives. Now we have a Minister of Finance who is carrying on the same tradition of responsibility. That yields results.

Just think, we are heading into an election when the unemployment rate in Canada is the lowest it has been in 30 years. It is enough to make the opposition blush. Obviously a record like that is enviable.

Before I get too carried away with everything we have done and everything going on in Canada, I want to say that I am sharing my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who will have a lot more to add.

Why have an election when Canadians are benefiting from extraordinarily low interest rates? These rates allow young families to dream and own property. They allow young entrepreneurs to expand their businesses. These interest rates are another enviable record.

• (1620)

This is the reason why the economy is doing so well. We have a positive trade balance.

We observe all that and we wonder why people want to call an election. We question the frivolity of the opposition. It is not as if the country were in crisis and a change of government were necessary. The country is doing very well: too well for the opposition's taste.

Let us take for example the health care situation in Quebec. We have signed a historic agreement on health which will permit improvements in the system over the next 10 years. It involves an additional \$9.6 billion over 10 years. It is an asymmetrical agreement which respects the constitutional responsibilities of each level of government.

In the area of child care, we have just signed a \$1.1 billion agreement over the next five years with the Government of Quebec. Here again, this is a historic agreement.

With regard to the gasoline tax, a central commitment of our government, once again, an agreement has been reached—one that has delighted all the mayors in Quebec and in Canada. For once, a government is taking an interest in the municipal infrastructures which have an impact on our quality of life.

We have also signed an agreement for \$1.3 billion on major infrastructure with Quebec's Minister of Finance, Mr. Michel Audet.

I can go on. In addition, we have reached an agreement on parental leave that calls for an annual transfer of \$750 million.

Everything is fine. Relations between Quebec City and Ottawa are in good shape. We are keeping our promises.

But that is what irritates the Bloc Québécois: things are going too well. Of course, the Bloc members feed on failure. Every day here, they want to nourish failure. The worse things are for their voters, the more they can blame Ottawa. They can never be happy about good news, because good news strengthens Canada and that is the opposite of what they want.

They have the same attitude towards the truth set out in the Gomery report. Judge Gomery was very clear in his comments. He totally exonerated the Prime Minister and the Quebec ministers at the time. Nevertheless, the Bloc Québécois and the Opposition are continuing what I think are disgraceful attempts at slander.

There are an enormous number of things to be done at this time. However, for the personal benefit of the opposition parties—we will ultimately see that they were wrong, for the voters will punish them accordingly—some important issues will have to be neglected over

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the next two months because of the irresponsibility of the Opposition.

For example, in the area of softwood lumber, my colleague the Minister of International Trade is working hard to make sure that the rights of Canadian businesses are protected. He will have to be out campaigning over the next two months. And yet this matter clearly deserved the government's full attention.

Then there is the matter of agriculture. At a time when some members, especially from Quebec, have claimed to be the great defenders of supply management, they want to defeat the government that was supposed to be going to Hong Kong for the very purpose of defending supply management. Then they will say that the government did not do its job. They are the ones who decided to shorten the government's lifespan. They would be happy to have Quebec farmers enraged if supply management is lost.

We will not let them do it, any more than we will allow ourselves to be distracted by their little games.

There is work to be done in the manufacturing sector as well. The economy is doing well, but some sectors are in transition. This is true of textiles, clothing, furniture and even assembly. It is vital to have a responsible, stable government providing economic security to help these workers and industries successfully make these transitions.

And yet, the opposition has decided to force an election that is not really necessary.

We will have an opportunity over the next two months to go out and see the Canadian people and explain to them that we are not delighted to be back knocking on doors. They were satisfied with this government. We will tell them one thing: if they want political stability, the first thing to do is to get rid of the Bloc, if they do not want to get caught in the wringer of separation.

• (1625)

The Bloc Québécois will not talk about separation any more during elections. It only talks about that between elections. Their program is very simple: phase one, the Bloc Québécois and then PQ offices in their ridings; phase two, Duceppe, Boisclair; and phase three, referendum, sovereignty, unilateral separation.

This time, the Quebec voters will not be fooled.

Mr. Guy Côté (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked how it came to this. I will point out to him that he will soon have ample opportunity to inquire. Perhaps it came to this because the government failed to ensure that more than 40% of workers qualify for employment insurance, and soon.

It may be that the government is playing with figures and, as a result, has come up with three different budgets since May. It may be that, instead of looking after its own responsibilities, it is trying to take the place of Quebec and the provinces in the areas of education, child care, early childhood, health, and with municipalities. It may be that, when the prospect of elections was raised in May and June, it managed to make commitments totalling \$21 billion in 21 days. It is the same scenario all over again. It may be that this government is linked to one of the biggest scandals in Canada's political history.

Supply

Its Prime Minister keeps repeating that his priorities are health, education, early childhood and municipalities. Would the Minister of Transport not say that his Prime Minister is simply at the wrong level of government and should run at the provincial level instead?

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, first of all, for employment insurance, I know that the Bloc members are not concerned with the employment aspect, as we are, but only the employment insurance aspect. That is exactly in line with their philosophy, as I have said. They want to ensure that as many people as possible are out of work so that as many people as possible will be riled up. That is not our approach. The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been for thirty years, and they ought to be pleased about that.

The Bloc is also talking about government spending. Are they not in favour of the \$30 billion or so in tax reductions we have made available to Canadians, because our economy is in good shape? Are they not in favour of the \$535 million in equalization payments that will be going to Quebec because the economy of Ontario and Alberta is in good shape? Are they not in favour of the way we are sharing funds?

When the hon. member says that the federal government is not responding to Quebec's aspirations, that is not true. In the area of health, all provincial first ministers have asked for additional transfers for health, and we have said yes. All first ministers have asked us to do more for education, and we have said yes. Quebec's finance minister was delighted that they are going to receive transfer payments for student loans and bursaries to facilitate access to higher education.

This government has a record of which we can be proud, and that is exactly what we will be taking door to door in Quebec. We offer economic security, political stability and international leadership.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the testimony during the Gomery inquiry revealed that the Liberals have lost the moral authority to govern, but there are indications that the corruption is far more widespread.

During 2003 a cash contribution from a container company controlled by John Webster, David Herle and Michael Connolly, 55555 Inc., was listed as the single largest contributor to the Liberal Party, in the amount of \$2,974,341.20. Polling contracts were identified by the Auditor General as an area abused by the Liberal Party and Justice Gomery was specifically prevented from investigating that part of the Auditor General's report.

As a phantom company with no previous history, could money have been washed through this company the way donations were washed through companies named by Justice Gomery in his report?

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member reacted as though she had taken lessons from Dale Carnegie. In reality, she is trying yet again to tarnish reputations. She is abusing her parliamentary privilege, something the opposition has been doing for months. Not only did the opposition members not expect Justice Gomery's findings to totally contradict them, but they spent months

and months trying to tarnish the reputations of the Prime Minister and the ministers of this government who were fully exonerated.

Accordingly, these smear campaigns and the use and abuse of parliamentary immunity are totally disgraceful. We approve of Justice Gomery's findings that the Prime Minister and all the Quebec ministers are totally exonerated. They are as pure as driven snow.

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I believe I am sharing the time with the hon. Minister of Transport.

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to clarify for the House that the time between the Minister of Transport and the parliament secretary has been divided.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development (Internationally Trained Workers Initiative), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in today's opposition day motion. I want to focus on two major points. First, I want to highlight the incoherent and inconsistent approach that the opposition has taken to the confidence conventions of Parliament.

Second, I want to take the opportunity to put on record the numerous initiatives that this government has taken to change the way that things work in Ottawa, to change our institutions, to change the way that things work in Canada to support productivity and investing in Canadians, to in fact look at increasing our trade and competitiveness in the world, and to play a role in the world to protect and to be compassionate with other nations that are not as fortunate. These are the things that this government has done and would like to do.

For weeks the opposition has supported the government in implementing its policy agenda, even while talking about wanting to force an election. If that is not an incoherent thing, I do not know what it is.

In speech after speech the opposition has talked about the Gomery report and what terrible things it said. I would like to quote what Justice Gomery said. He said:

There is no reason for the public's confidence in the integrity of our democratic institutions to be shaken....Canadians should not forget that the vast majority of our public officials and politicians do their work honestly, diligently and effectively, and emerge from this inquiry free of any blame.

Instead, what we hear is innuendo after innuendo and I can only come to one conclusion. We know that the Prime Minister has promised to call an election 30 days after Justice Gomery's final report. Why is it that if everyone across the way is so convinced that we have done terrible things that they do not want to listen to what the facts say in the report? Because the opposition wants to run an election on innuendo. The opposition does not wish to run an election on facts. Those members do not want to hear what Justice Gomery has to say, but we want to hear what Justice Gomery has to say.

Supply

The fact is it was this government that brought the Gomery commission into being, giving it the broadest possible mandate to get to the truth. It was this government that cancelled the whole sponsorship program as soon as the Auditor General's report came out saying that there were problems with that program. It was this government that took steps immediately after Justice Gomery brought out his interim report to take care of some of the things that he talked about with regard to the bad apples that we have all heard about within the Liberal Party itself and within other sectors. This innuendo is really what it is all about.

The whole idea of confidence and the confidence convention in this place is at the heart of our system of responsible government. In fact, it is a basic principle that requires the government to be responsible to the House for its actions. This government must have the confidence of a majority of members to remain in power.

There have been very few occasions in Canadian history, in fact there have been no examples over the last 25 years, when a government has fallen because of a confidence vote. The first government to be defeated was the Meighen government in 1926. Prime Minister Meighen was defeated on a motion that basically questioned the legal authority of the government to govern.

We know from that affair that Prime Minister Meighen took action in the House of Commons. As a result of the lack of confidence in him personally, the opposition took the immediate opportunity for lack of confidence in him.

In 1974 the Trudeau government was defeated on a subamendment to a budget that neither opposition party could support.

The best known example of a government being defeated on no confidence was the Clark government in 1979, when the opposition parties strongly objected to Mr. Crosbie's budget that increased gasoline taxes.

What do opposition parties do when they are faced with a lack of confidence? They immediately do what they need to do to defeat the government at the earliest opportunity. We know that the opposition could have done that by passing a subamendment to the budget which condemned past governments for their policies.

What do these experiences teach us about that convention and that practice in this House? We have learned that opposition parties in the past were not afraid to demonstrate their lack of confidence in governments.

What we have seen in this House is games being played. We have seen silliness in the past by members not going to committees and not forming a quorum in the House, a little bit of game playing. This is not about a lack of confidence. The same opposition parties supported this government on its ways and means motion yesterday. They have supported this government on its budget bills.

•(1635)

The opposition parties have supported this government, although I must say it is inconsistent of Her Majesty's official opposition in saying that it wants tax cuts and then did not support tax cuts. It is another example of the incoherence and the game playing that is going on. In fact, when we brought about \$100 billion in tax cuts in

2001, the same opposition party that bleats about tax cuts all the time did not support it either.

I just wonder whether this is all a game. Is this a game? With a lack of confidence in a government, it should not be supporting the government's votes in the House. On 50 occasions in Parliament those opposition parties have expressed their confidence in this same government. Now this week, suddenly they are eager to implement the government's fiscal priorities. We saw that from the way they voted.

There was the absurd motion a week ago Monday which suggested that the opposition parties want an election called in January, but in the meantime, they want the government to implement its policies. Are they supporting the government's policies? Do they think that they are good? If so, they have confidence in the government.

Again we are back to political opportunism, wanting to run on innuendo and not wanting to wait for the Gomery report to listen to the truth. If they are so convinced that this government is corrupt, they should listen to the truth and then run on that. That is not what we see happening here. What we see is political opportunism at its absolute worst.

There are facts that I want to bring out. It was, as I said before, this government that brought about the Gomery commission. We are not afraid of Gomery. We want to hear Gomery. We want to hear what he says. We want to listen to him so that we can make those changes, and we have already made changes after his interim report.

For the sake of a few months, three months actually, we have really important bills, but these opposition parties do not want to bring about those bills, for whatever their reasons. These are bills that, for shame, many of Her Majesty's loyal opposition who come from the west should feel terrible about not bringing forward.

We hear them arguing about how they have no trust in the United States trade, that softwood lumber is not working and there is frustration. What does this government do? We want to diversify and broaden our trade, so we set up the Asia-Pacific trading systems. We want to work on that. We set up the Pacific gateway bill. We set up some policies that go with the Pacific gateway. The ones that would benefit are the western provinces, yet this bill is not going to come fruition because the opposition parties do not want to wait three months to allow this bill to pass. As a British Columbian, I can only say shame, shame, shame. That is all I can say.

The 2010 Olympics is going to be a really big thing for British Columbia. We have worked so hard. That bill was to come here within the next three months. They do not want that to come forward. The money that was to be allocated for that is going to die.

We talked about street racing and there was this big talk in the House about crime. We are bringing out a street racing bill. In Richmond, B.C. we have seen the death of a policeman and others from street racing. That bill is not going to be passed because the opposition parties are in hurry to get into an election and not allow that come to the floor.

Supply

The NDP are no better. We heard questions today in question period about most indebted countries. We have a bill of \$130 million to forgive the debt for the most indebted countries. That bill is not going to pass, yet the NDP are saying they care about it.

We talked about immigration. We have about \$168 million now that is going to go to immigration to deal with citizenship, to deal with adoption, to deal with some of the things that those parties have said they wanted to support. That bill is not going to come before the House because of that political opportunism.

There is climate change and the Public Health Agency. We are worried about avian flu. We saw what happened with SARS. None of those things are going to come to pass because of that kind of cheap political opportunism in this House.

All I can say is shame.

● (1640)

Mr. Jim Gouk (British Columbia Southern Interior, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if anybody knows about funny speaking, it is the hon. member who just spoke.

First, she talks about the games that are played. Let us talk about some of the games. Let us talk about a government that removes the opposition supply days so a non-confidence motion cannot be brought forward on a corrupt government.

Let us talk about when the Liberals filibustered their own motions to prevent anything else from coming forward. Then they voted closure on themselves in order to cut it off at the end. Talk about games.

Then there were the arcane procedures that the Liberals brought up to disrupt the normal flow of business in the House in June. I am not sure if it was the hon. member who just spoke or the transport minister before that who talked about deals with the Bloc. We have not made a deal with members of the Bloc. They happen to be voting the same way we are. That is the deal.

However, the Liberals made a deal with members of the Bloc last June to get their support and to prevent us from bringing forward motions. They do not need to tell us about playing games. They are the ones who are doing it.

The Liberals lament about the fact that we are having an early election. Yet they did it in 1979 after only nine months, as the hon. member herself said, because of a gas tax. Yet as soon as the Liberals became government, they put in the very thing on which they defeated the previous government.

We are not getting the gateway bill and other bills like that. Why? Because the government has never brought them forward. They have not even been on the order paper. The gateway bill would have passed. We had already indicated we would support it, but the Liberals did not bring it forward. They are playing games. They want to hold that up and say that this is the gateway bill, but we did not get it because the opposition called an election.

The final point the member can address is in terms of an early election. She said that they were prepared to call the election as soon as the final report of Gomery came in, which was due on December 1. It has been delayed. If the final report had been delivered on

December 1, it would have meant we would have had an election in late December, early January, the very thing we offered the Liberals and they turned it down. If there are any games being played, it is by them.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made a promise to this nation, face to face and directly, that he would call an election 30 days after the Gomery inquiry report. Mr. Gomery makes a decision about when to bring his report down and we know his report is scheduled for February 1. Thirty days after that, the Prime Minister will do as he promised.

However, I still have to wonder why the opposition parties do not want to hear what Mr. Gomery has to say, and prefer to run an election on innuendo.

Deals with the Bloc? When we make a deal with any political party in this place, and we have done so, it is to help to pass public policy. It is to help to move legislation forward. This is for the benefit of Canadians.

We know what the Bloc's agenda is. It is not a hidden agenda. Bloc members are raising and increasing their capacity and their capability to divide the country once more into separation. It is for shame that the opposition parties are making deals with them to bring down a government so that can happen.

● (1645)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech. Unfortunately, all the criteria about which she complained and about the timing of the election, could have been solved had the Liberals been prepared to compromise and work in the context of a minority Parliament, and not pretend that they had a huge majority from Canadians to do whatever they wanted to do.

We could have heard the second Gomery report if the Prime Minister had accepted the opposition proposal. We would have heard the second Gomery before the election date. We could have dealt with legislation right up until the Christmas recess. We could have gone through a lot of legislation till then, but the Liberals were unwilling to compromise so we will be unable to do that.

We could have had more legislation on the agenda. The parliamentary secretary knows full well that the citizenship legislation to which she referred was delayed and delayed. It was promised months and months ago. Then finally when we get it at the last minute, it is only a small portion of what was promised originally.

We could have avoided a holiday campaign by accepting the opposition proposal for an election called in January to be held in February. That would have met all her complaints, but her government, her Prime Minister, were not willing to join the compromise and realize that Canadians had only given them a minority government, not a majority government. I hope she can comment on that.

Supply

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I will be delighted to comment on that. The hon. member said that we did not compromise. We did. We made an agreement with the NDP for the sake of passing important measures in the budget early in the spring of this year. However, when the NDP wanted to make another deal that we did not think was in the best interests of the people of Canada, we said no, so it picked up its toys and decided to go home. That is what we call making a compromise in the House.

The Prime Minister made a promise that he would let Gomery give his final report and call an election 30 days after. We have heard from Mr. Gomery that it will not be until February 1. He cannot break that promise. He made the promise to get to the truth. Sufficient money was spent on the report. Mr. Gomery went around the country in order to write a report and to find the facts. We need to hear those facts, and that is why we cannot make the “compromise” about which the hon. member spoke.

The member spoke about delays in bringing forward legislation. I recall in the House when two opposition parties would not come to committees. I recall when opposition parties walked out of the House so its business could not be done. I still say that this is about games, and it is a shameful thing.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Macleod, Softwood Lumber; the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, National Parole Board; the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join in this debate. The big question is does the House have confidence in the government? The answer to that is a resounding no from every opposition member in the House.

One might ask why I, coming from the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, would not have confidence in the government? Unfortunately, an end has to come to this debate tonight and unfortunately there will be a vote Monday and we will leave here. I could go on until some time well into next week giving reasons why I have absolutely no confidence in the government.

Last year we saw a battle in the House like none ever fought before on behalf of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It came as a result of game playing by the government opposite.

In the last election, the government committed to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador that it would provide greater benefits from the revenues derived from offshore development. It made the promise simply because the Conservative Party had made a solid commitment to the province in writing, which the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, being the smart individual he is, held up and asked the Prime Minister to match. Under pressure, the Prime Minister did but never in writing.

What did we see after the election? We saw the government back away from the commitments. We saw it trying to twist and turn every way it could to get out of delivering to our province the promises it had made. The provisions from the development of the offshore oil resources are so abundant off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Conservative Party and its leader, along with all members, not only Atlantic members, tried to convince the Prime Minister to deliver on his promise. Not only had Newfoundland and Labrador received such a promise, so had Nova Scotia. Members from Nova Scotia and my province, including the member for St. John's East and myself, along with the leader and every member in the Conservative caucus and others helped in this effort.

It took constant pressure day after day. It took the province to get down on its knees, eventually taking down flags to draw attention to the problem, before the Prime Minister relented and was forced into delivering. People ask why we should have confidence in the government. That is one of the answers.

Let us look at the fishery. During the Prime Minister's visit to my province prior to the last election, he promised that we would take custodial management of the fisheries off the nose and tail of the Grand Banks. When the campaigning started, the government said that we would take custodial management. We have not heard the words mentioned since by the government. In fact, we have seen it back away.

Before I go too far, Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the member for Durham.

It was promise after promise, and we have seen it happen again. Yesterday the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans came to my province. He talked about all the things the government was doing to preserve our cod stocks. He did it because tomorrow the standing committee will be tabling a report which will show to the House and the country what the government has done to try to protect and enhance the stocks off the coast of eastern Canada. Game playing is absolutely at its fullest.

• (1650)

What about search and rescue? Why did it take a search and rescue helicopter over two hours to leave the ground when a distress signal had been received from an overturned boat? It took half an hour or so to identify where the signal came from.

I realize it is a big ocean and it probably does take some time, but officials were phoning everywhere to determine whether the boat was at sea and whether it was a valid call. All the Department of National Defence had to do was call the Department of Fisheries to find out. With the black boxes that are on our boats now, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is updated every hour as to where these boats are. One call to one of the government's own departments could have told them in seconds where the boat was. It took over half an hour of phoning all over the place in an uncoordinated manner to determine whether the signal was legitimate.

When it was determined that the signal was legitimate, it took 1 hour and 55 minutes to get a chopper off the ground. Why? It was because the search and rescue crews work eight hours a day, five days a week. Unfortunately, the original eight hour shift was still on duty when the signal was received but they were let go and the standby crew had to be called in. It gets worse but I will go on more with this story later this evening because there were some other complications.

Supply

However the loss of time also meant the loss of lives unfortunately. Two people died within 25 minutes of rescue arriving. If the rescue had been more efficient those two crew members would have been saved. Should we have confidence in a government that runs an operation that way?

With respect to our seniors, we saw the charade being played here yesterday when the Liberals tried to say, in supporting one of the bills brought forth, that they support seniors. However when they were asked by the Bloc who put forth the motion if they would be willing to have the bill go to third reading, which the NDP, the Bloc and ourselves agreed to, they declined to do so.

The charade is up front. The Liberals make commitments and promises before an election but they do not deliver afterward. The people of Canada are sick and tired of it. The only people rewarded by their promises are their friends, which Justice Gomery did a good job of pointing out.

Liberal members have stood in their place time after time and said that Justice Gomery has cleared the Prime Minister. Justice Gomery said that the Prime Minister should be exonerated from the management and the direction of the program. He did not say that he did not know or that he was not involved. In fact, Justice Gomery said that ministers turned their backs on what was going on. He said that Treasury Board abdicated its responsibilities.

Who was the vice-chair of Treasury Board? Who was the minister of finance who directed funding? Who was the key minister, the spark plug from Quebec, in the government? Everybody knows it was the member for LaSalle—Émard, the Prime Minister.

Is anyone going to believe that somebody who was the minister of finance, the vice-chair of Treasury Board, the key man in Quebec, did not know what was going on during the scandal? There are two options: first, the truth is not being told; or second, the individual had to be totally incompetent. Either way, members of the House of Commons and the people of this country would have no confidence in somebody running this country who fits into either one of those categories. They would certainly have no confidence in the way ministries are run.

As I said, I could go on well into next week with other reasons but I have agreed to split my time and I will certainly do that with the member for Durham.

• (1655)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments of my colleague from the Conservative Party. I was under the impression that he had some experience in government and that he would have known how government operates. I had the distinct honour and pleasure to serve as the parliamentary secretary to the former minister of finance in 1999-2001 and I know how he operates. I know the kind of schedule he keeps and the kind of focus he has on the large macro-economic picture. I know the time that is spent on building a budget and looking at the various analyses leading up to a budget. I know how he deals with issues of fiscal policy.

Once a budget is developed and presented in the House of Commons, once the legislation is written up and the ways and means

motions are prepared, then the minister of finance looks to his ministers to implement those programs and services within the resources that are allocated.

The minister of finance cannot be expected to be running around a \$180 billion operation checking to see whether every bit of money that is spent is in accordance with government policy and Treasury Board policy. It is not an operation like a local garage. The owner and operator of a garage would know how every cent is spent, but the minister of finance is in charge of a \$180 billion a year organization.

I went to a lot of the meetings in 1999-2001 and this item was never on the radar, nor should it have been because that is not the role of the minister of finance. The member opposite should know how the government operates.

• (1700)

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, let me thank the hon. member for telling me, telling you and telling the whole House how incompetent the minister of finance really was.

I was in government and I was a minister. I ran the department and I knew what was going on in my department. I did not get in trouble nor did any of my people because we did what we were supposed to do. We looked after the money that came to us from Treasury Board and Finance but we had to account for it.

Government or ministers of finance or presidents of Treasury Board or treasury boards do not throw out money to departments and say, "Here you are, little boys and girls, do whatever you want with that money". Everyone has to be accountable, which means that the people in charge of the purse, Treasury Board and Finance, must follow the dollar. In this case, they did not follow the millions of dollars, not to say the dollar.

Can we absolve the Prime Minister because as minister of finance he did not know? If he did not know, he should have known.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we hear it over and over again that if the minister of finance did not know, he should have known. That would mean that we are accusing the minister of finance at the time of being negligent. Either we accept the Gomery report or we do not. We cannot be selective.

Let us talk about the issue of negligence.

The Gomery report stated very clearly in section 16.3, page 430 of the English language version:

[The Prime Minister], whose role as Finance Minister did not involve him in the supervision of spending by the PMO or PWGSC, is entitled, like other Ministers in the Quebec caucus, to be exonerated from any blame for carelessness or misconduct.

Ministers are not responsible for what they do not know about the actions and decisions of the PMO or other ministers. This absolves the finance minister at the time from negligence. Has the hon. member read this page in the report?

Supply

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, the testimonies just keep on coming because again we are hearing people say that the finance minister was directly involved, but he did not know what was going on. The former prime minister, Mr. Chrétien, who chaired cabinet as prime minister, said that he knew as well as everyone else knew.

To say that he is exonerated, certainly. We did not say, the Bloc did not say nor did the NDP say that the present Prime Minister was there and supervised who received what share of the money from what good friend in the promotions company. Oh, no. Mr. Gomery said that he was not involved in the supervision but he did not say that he did not know.

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the critical need for a change in the leadership, government and culture in how this country has been run.

Today, we have a corrupt and arrogant government that does not believe in democracy, accountability, and has learned nothing from the Gomery report or the Auditor General of Canada.

First and foremost, I stand on behalf of the honest hardworking men and women, the families across our country, the seniors who after a lifetime of work deserve better, and our children and youth who will inherit this country as the next generation. The government has made a mockery of the democratic process and robbed the public purse with which it was entrusted. This is not the legacy we should be creating.

The citizens in my riding of Durham want the same things Canadians in Nova Scotia want. They want the same things Canadians in Quebec and B.C. want. Honest Canadians want honest government, principled and accountable to the people. However, my constituents know that this is not possible with the government. They know this country has a sorry future with a government that has been found guilty of criminally stealing public funds and makes promises it has no intention of keeping.

If we allow the government to continue in office, what does that say about us as a country? What does it say to our children whom we want to grow into adults with integrity and principles, who see a purpose in hard work and earning an honest living, who enjoy the fruits of their labour, and will willingly contribute to the well-being of fellow Canadians and to this country's future?

If we allow the government to stay in office, we are saying that bribery, criminal activities, and deception are the basis on which we choose to build our country, making us no better than countries based on corruption and thievery, countries many of our newer Canadians have left behind. The Conservative Party is not prepared to let that happen.

We believe that Canadians deserve a government that earns their trust, not abuses their trust, and a government that believes it is accountable to every voter and not entitled to break laws and deny it when caught. This Liberal government is about sponsorship, HRDC boondoggles, Shawinigate, and remember our subs and helicopters.

For years members of the Liberal Party have been abusing taxpayers and using our money for their own purposes. The Liberal Party ignores laws and does nothing to strengthen laws to protect Canadians. Despite the Prime Minister's promise to clean up

government, like his other promises, the scandals and abuse just keep happening. This cannot be allowed to continue.

Canadians want an open, transparent, and accountable government that cares about the issues that they have to deal with every day, such as jobs, the environment, education, public security, and rising energy prices and taxes. These are the issues that we should be debating in the House of Commons.

The seniors in my riding are facing rising costs, lost income and struggling to stay in their homes. Why did the government keep Bill C-66 off the order paper for so long, a bill that would provide them with the help they need? Why threaten income trusts which are the retirement savings of thousands?

Why did the government cancel the take note debate last week on the agricultural crisis requested by a member of the opposition? Why did the government vote against so many motions to help farmers in Canada? Why did the government vote against the bill to protect young children from sexual predators? Why has the government not delivered its promised auto strategy only to see the announcement this week that almost 4,000 auto workers in Durham are facing job losses? I could go on and on.

The government has to be held to account for its inactions on so many issues challenging Canadians today. Conservatives have shown good faith in trying to make government work. Of the 72 government bills put before the House of Commons, the Conservative Party voted to support or indicated it supported over 60% of those bills. Canadians have given each of us in this chamber their trust, a trust that we will look to their concerns, well-being and futures.

Canadians' tax dollars are an investment in a prosperous future for our nation. That prosperity will not become a reality under the government. Why? Canadians' tax dollars are being wasted on a \$2 billion gun registry, but gun violence increases.

● (1705)

Payments to advertising agencies end up in envelopes to pay for Liberal election campaigns and millions are lost and unaccounted for in contracts to Liberal friends. Now the government is on a free fall spending spree with no more forethought than the spectre of the upcoming election.

As each day passes the amount goes up and up at a rate of a billion dollars a day. This frantic frenzy has to stop. This is craziness. It is no more than bribery for votes. The Liberals are trying to bribe Canadians with their own money.

Canadians will not be fooled by these shabby tactics, nor will they be deceived by the threats that seniors will lose their GIS increases that have already been passed by the House.

Royal Assent

The military knows that as of last April it has been receiving the raises in salary the Prime Minister claims will be lost if an election is called. The municipalities in Durham can be assured that their infrastructure dollars are not in jeopardy.

I am certain that these final, desperate attempts to cling to power will only reinforce the resolve of Canadians to elect an honest, principled and more accountable government. We need leadership that will not close its eyes or deny its culpability in these acts.

The Gomery report may have exonerated the Prime Minister from responsibility for the operation and management of the sponsorship scandal. Sure, he was not the shop foreman, but as the finance minister, the second in command at Treasury Board, in control of the Liberal Party in Quebec, how could he have not known? Either he was involved or he was incompetent. Either way, we know that this is not leadership.

Let us remember, the Prime Minister was there for the GST flip-flop. He was there for the tainted blood scandal. He was there for the APEC inquiry, Pearson airport and David Dingwall.

Now is the time for principled Conservative action. Now is the time for the Leader of the Opposition's federal accountability act, a contract with Canadians, to clean up government and put Canada back on the track to prosperity.

I came to this chamber with a deep sense of pride and the weight of the responsibility given to me by the voters in Durham. Each of us has a duty; the duty of public service, not entitlement. I was honoured to have the opportunity to work for my constituents, for all Canadians and for my country. However, there is no honour in allowing corruption, mistrust and inaction to invade the core system of our nationhood, the federal government.

At the beginning of this new millennium it will be a Conservative government that will fight to bring honour and pride back to Canada. Under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition, the Conservative Party is a powerful and effective force in Parliament, a party of principled direction, honesty and vision.

We are a party with a plan for Canada. We have a plan to give families jobs and the right to the rewards of their earnings; a plan so seniors can live in their retirement without worrying about access to health care, paying bills and safety in the street; a plan for economic prosperity and growth; and a plan so our children and youth will care about their neighbours, their community and their country because they are proud to be Canadians.

We believe in and hold the same values as Canadian families, communities and individuals. We believe each one of us deserves the same opportunities to a good job, an education, and to the economic well-being for families and seniors in safe, strong communities.

Let the people of Canada define themselves as a people who want trust and integrity, not corruption; action, not only promises; a prosperous future, not financial woes. Canadians must have the opportunity to decide the kind of Canada they want and the future they believe the next generation deserves. That is why I am confident Canadians will choose to elect a Conservative government.

•(1710)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member was talking about some of the economic concerns of families in her riding of Durham. I know that people in my constituency are concerned about the rate of poverty in Canada. Today we had the Campaign 2000 report card on child poverty in Canada. It points out that there are still over a million children in Canada living in poverty and that 48% of those children live in families where the parents are actually working. The report also points out that 49% of immigrant children in Canada are living in poverty as well. These are damning statistics.

I wonder if the member might comment on those statistics and comment. For me, this is a real issue of confidence in the government's inability to deal with the whole issue of poverty in Canada, when we see it rising. Would the member comment on that?

Ms. Bev Oda: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to respond about child poverty in Canada. I think it is a disgrace that Canada has such a high degree of child poverty. This is not something that we characterize Canada as having.

We have role models here who are not showing us that we need to take care of each other. The role models we have in the government show us that we just take care of ourselves. If we cannot show a better example to Canadians, then we will not have the needed caring of each other and everyone in our community.

Child poverty is an extremely important concern that we have to address. As I said in my speech, I am concerned about what we are leaving as a legacy for the next generation and to have child poverty in this country is something that we cannot abide by. We believe that every family has to have the opportunity to earn a good living in order to make their future secure.

We believe that we want a country—

•(1715)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It being 5:15 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings. Pursuant to order made earlier today all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Monday, November 28, 2005, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you would seek it, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Private Members' Business

Ottawa

November 24, 2005

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the schedule to this letter on the 24th day of November, 2005, at 3:47 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Uteck

The Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill S-37, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Cultural Property Export and Import Act—chapter 40; Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act (promotion of English and French)—chapter 41; and Bill C-28, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act—chapter 42.

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**TRADE COMPENSATION ACT**

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-364, An Act to provide compensation to Canadian industry associations and to Canadian exporters who incur financial losses as a result of unjustified restrictive trade actions by foreign governments which are signatories to trade agreements involving Canadian products, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

● (1720)

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to make a ruling on Bill C-364, the trade compensation act. I am prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader on October 19, 2005, concerning Bill C-364, the trade compensation act.

At the outset I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for having raised this important issue concerning the financial prerogative of the Crown. I would also like to thank the hon. members for Vancouver Island North and for Fort McMurray—Athabasca for their interventions on this matter.

Bill C-364 proposes that the Minister of Finance shall compensate any Canadian exporter of Canadian goods exported to a foreign state for the loss incurred as a result of any unjustified restrictive trade actions by the government of that state.

The parliamentary secretary pointed out that clause 3 of the bill requires the Minister of Finance to pay all reasonable legal expenses of exporters and industry associations and would therefore require a royal recommendation.

In rebuttal, the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca argued that such funding was already authorized since the Minister of

International Trade announced on April 15, 2005, in a press release that “funding will be provided to offset legal expenses incurred in defending Canadian interests against U.S. trade actions in the softwood lumber trade dispute”.

The Chair would comment that while funding may have been made available for a specific purpose by the Minister of International Trade, Bill C-364 is proposing an expenditure of public funds for a general purpose that is new. Despite what provisions may appear in other acts, the Chair is of the view that such a statutory initiative as expressed in Bill C-364 would have to be accompanied by a recommendation from the Crown as it mandates a new expenditure of public funds.

In his point of order, the parliamentary secretary also stated that clause 4 obliges the minister to provide loan guarantees whenever a deposit, surety or bond must be posted by an exporter or an industry association pending resolution of a dispute by a tribunal and that such a provision requires a royal recommendation.

The member for Vancouver Island North argued that the loan guarantee only commits the government to back a loan in that it does not result in public funds being actually removed from the consolidated revenue fund.

It is important to note, however, that if such a loan defaulted, the Crown would be responsible for paying the debt. For this reason, the bill requires a royal recommendation as it mandates a new expenditure of public funds by imposing this liability upon the consolidated revenue fund.

Consequently, I must conclude that Bill C-364 requires a royal recommendation.

The member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca said on November 14 that this does not prevent debate from continuing at second reading or prevent the bill from being considered in committee or at report stage if the House so decides. He is absolutely correct in this respect. However, the purpose of my decision today is clarify the requirement for a royal recommendation before third reading.

Accordingly, due to provisions which authorize spending, the Chair will decline to put the question on third reading of this bill in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

SECOND READING

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the time to acknowledge the ruling that you have just made. For that reason, of course, the position of the government is upheld, and indeed, this is a matter that would require an expenditure issue, a money bill. Therefore, the bill will not go beyond this one hour of debate.

At the same time I want to recognize my colleague, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, who is also the member of Parliament for Sydney—Victoria. I have been with him for some time here and I know that he has been extremely able in terms of opening new markets and opportunities for Canadian business. His work, often done in other fields and jurisdictions, has indeed borne much fruit for labourers, individuals and small companies right across this country. I think Parliament owes him a very strong vote of thanks for the work he has done.

Private Members' Business

I am pleased to take part in today's debate on Bill C-364, which is, as you have stated, an act to provide compensation to Canadian industry associations and exporters who incur financial losses as a result of unjustified restrictive trade actions by foreign governments which are signatories to trade agreements involving Canadian products.

I would also like to use my time to respond to some of the statements already made by certain opposition members during the first hour of debate on the bill. As we know, the bill would provide compensation to Canadian industry associations and exporters that incur financial losses as a result of unjustified restrictive trade actions by foreign governments which are signatories to trade agreements with Canada.

On that point, I am obviously very pleased with the initiative by the government, the Minister of Trade and the Prime Minister on the question of softwood lumber. It would appear that our plotting has certainly been very successful and will continue to be so.

Mr. Speaker, I speak with some certainty in saying that you understand this industry perhaps better than most in Parliament.

It is for those reasons that this is indeed good news for that sector and for trade.

As we know, there are two components of the bill. The first would require the federal government to defray legal expenses incurred by the private sector in instances where a foreign state restricts Canadian exports in a manner that is found to contravene any bilateral or multilateral agreement. The second component proposes that the government provide loan guarantees to cover deposits, sureties or bonds that may be required of Canadian exporters by the foreign state, pending the final determination of a tribunal.

As I have mentioned, my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, stated during the first hour of debate on October 19 that the federal government appreciates the concerns relating to legal costs associated with the defence of Canadian interests in these trade disputes. The Government of Canada understands that costs associated with the defence of trade cases, particularly legal expenses, are often significant.

The complexities of issues entrenched in trade disputes, along with the number of parties involved in such cases, are all factors that can contribute inexorably to increased legal costs. There should be no doubt that this government is unequivocally committed to representing and actively defending Canadian interests in all and any international trade fora. We do so every day.

We devote considerable financial and human resources to fostering a domestic environment conducive to the development and maintenance of consultative domestic networks. These networks allow stakeholders a voice in the determination of the Canadian response to unjustifiable trade restrictions by foreign governments and we cannot and should not underestimate the valuable work and role of Canadian representatives abroad in the defence of our national Canadian trade interests.

I can assure members that Canadian trade officials in our embassies and missions abroad work very hard to represent trade interests. Targeted advocacy campaigns and meeting with foreign

decision makers, the business community and local media are just some of the daily tasks executed by our representatives abroad. Their objective is clear: to advocate and foster positions favourable to Canada.

I would like now to respond to some of the statements made by my hon. colleagues across the floor when this issue was debated in October. I was somewhat surprised when the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca stated that it was about time that the federal government “spent some attention on softwood lumber and other issues of trade dispute”. As was mentioned earlier, this issue is now well on its way to being resolved as a result of what the government has done.

● (1725)

By our actions, we have made it crystal clear that the softwood lumber dispute is a top priority for the government. The Government of Canada is exploring every possible option with a view to resolving the dispute, including litigation, high level political intervention and advocacy.

As the hon. member knows, the Prime Minister has raised the issue with President Bush at every opportunity, including most recently on November 18 during the meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group, APEC, in Busan, Korea.

We certainly understand and are very sympathetic to the adverse impact of U.S. duties on Canadian companies, workers and communities. This is why the Government of Canada is committed to continue working with our industry and the provinces to press the United States to live up to its trade obligations.

This collaborative work is also done on behalf of other Canadian industries that are subject to unjustified restrictive trade measures. For example, when the United States initiated trade investigations against Canadian exports of wheat or some live swine, or when the United States blocked Canadian exports of beef, the government took action.

To say, then, that the government has “ignored” Canadian stakeholders involved in trade disputes would obviously be wrong. In fact, it would be the exact opposite.

I do indeed agree with the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca when he states that Canada is a trading nation. I could not agree more with him when he states that “the Canadian government has a clear duty...to take every step available in law to protect our export industries and our trade”.

We have done so and this government will continue to do so. However, the hon. member and other members of the opposition parties seem to send contradictory messages when discussing the bill. On the one hand, the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca has stated that “legal bills to date...are \$350 million and are escalating by \$100 million a year”. Then he stated that Bill C-364 “...likely will not cost the taxpayers any money at all, either in the short term or the long term”. Clearly with your ruling today, Mr. Speaker, I think that is certainly put to rest.

Unless I have misread Bill C-364, it is the hon. member's expectation that the bill would cover at least part of the legal costs incurred by the Canadian softwood lumber industry.

Private Members' Business

Of course, I am not trying here to downgrade the importance of the backdrop of Bill C-364, nor am I attempting to diminish the concerns associated with legal expenses in these kinds of trade disputes. The federal government also incurs legal expenses, but we believe that there are more effective and efficient ways to assist industries involved in trade disputes.

One example is the recently announced CAN-Trade initiative, in which the government reaffirmed its commitment to fostering jobs, economic growth and sustainable prosperity.

There are four major thrusts to this initiative. First is to strengthen and expand Canada's bilateral and multilateral framework and advocacy efforts. This will include promoting a successful completion of the Doha negotiations of the World Trade Organization, defending Canadian rights through NAFTA and the WTO, and developing, of course, new trade and investment policy tools and instruments.

The CAN-Trade initiative is about being aggressive and proactive with respect to targeted advocacy work in our new key and emerging markets. To this end, an additional \$12 million is proposed to broaden Canada's advocacy efforts in key markets, including through activities aimed at establishing institutional linkages and joint research in support of Canada's trade and economic interests.

International trade is a priority to the government and we continue to demonstrate this by our actions.

The federal government works with all Canadian interested stakeholders, both in Canada and abroad, toward a strong and unified position.

Are there unexpected delays in trade disputes? Yes.

Would we like to see the dispute settlement process work in a more timely fashion? Of course.

This is precisely why senior officials of all three NAFTA countries are discussing ways to improve the functioning of chapter 19.

Members may recall that the Prime Minister made Canada's concerns regarding this issue clear to President Bush during the president's visit in November 2004.

Let me assure this House, members and the Canadian public that the government will continue to work diligently and responsibly in defending Canadian trade interests involved in trade disputes.

Finally, the Government of Canada will continue to cooperate with domestic stakeholders toward strong and unified positions and will continue to be an active player within NAFTA and the WTO to clarify and improve the rules governing all international trade.

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by repeating that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the adoption of Bill C-364. In fact, if there has been one aspect of the federal government's action in the softwood lumber crisis that has been worthwhile, namely the legal preparations for eventually winning the case, there has also been an aspect that is far less worthwhile: the federal government's

reluctance to provide the companies with any proper help and support.

The hon. member's initiative is part of the remedy to that.

There is a need to send a clear message to all countries. In this case, it would apply to the Americans and the softwood lumber crisis. If they decide to go against international agreements, they will find their way blocked, as far as Canada is concerned, by a government that will defend the industries in the country that is affected and will make sure they are protected. That is the message from the government that I would have liked to see before, and am glad to find in the bill the hon. member has just introduced.

It is along the same lines as today's announcement by the federal government. There was a lot of extremely negative reaction to that. One article has as its headline "Forest industry aid program more than disappointing". It goes on:

Guy Chevette, CEO of the Quebec Forestry Industry Council is extremely disappointed with the forest industry aid program announced today by the [naming the Prime Minister of Canada] government .

Mr. Chevette is quoted as saying "It would appear that the Canadian government has still not grasped how precarious the financial situation of the Quebec forest industry is. In excess of \$330 million has been collected illegally by the United States every year since May 2002."

In line with this bill, we need to send a message to the Americans that we will, unequivocally, defend our industry.

In the same vein, we would have expected the federal government to provide loan guarantees for the total amount the companies have paid to the Americans, who received that money illegally. As far as the NAFTA panel is concerned, the Americans finally decided to comply, but without giving the money back. This is yet another indication that they want the debate to drag on, thereby ensuring that at the end of the day, there will be fewer and fewer Quebec and Canadian companies left.

Even if we win the legal battle, even if we achieve a return to free trade on softwood lumber, there will no longer be any companies left to celebrate.

In this vein, we wanted to see up to \$5 billion in loan guarantees. As the Quebec forest industry council said:

The Council finds that this decision sends the wrong message to the Americans, suggesting that Canada believes it can recover only \$800 million of the \$5 billion collected at the border.

Private Members' Business

We see what a negative impact the federal government's rather petty approach has on what remains the most important point of the negotiation, namely, recovering the \$5 billion illegally collected by the Americans. To ensure this is done, that a firm position is taken during the negotiation on this money, there should have been loan guarantees for the total amount. There also should have been a bill, like the one we have today, stating that if the U.S. government or any other government in the world does not respect decisions made by international agreement, we will protect the affected industry and come to its defence after that country has shown it failed to respect the international agreement.

The Americans have made a decision to respect the panel, but there is still no decision to ensure that we will recover the \$5 billion. We absolutely must move forward in that direction. For Quebec alone we are talking about \$1.2 billion paid to the Americans, while today the federal government has announced loan guarantees for only \$150 million.

It is as though they have decided to keep the companies afloat, but not to give them a serious hand. There are other aspects of the program that might be interesting in today's announcement, but the urgency of the moment, the urgency I felt at the meetings I had, the contact I had with industry people, with small, medium and big companies affected by the softwood lumber crisis, is that hard cash is needed as soon as possible to help our companies breathe and get through this crisis. In the same way today, the debate shows that the government is still nervous about the Conservative bill. In its action plan it has the same logic and is very nervous.

• (1735)

We should also look at the statements made on this initiative. The Quebec government made such a statement and said that, in its opinion, the assistance plan announced by the federal government for the softwood lumber industry is inadequate. The economic development, innovation and exports minister, Claude Béchar, hopes that the door will remain open in Ottawa, even after the federal election, so that Quebec can get more.

We feel a deep dissatisfaction about the announcement that was just made. We have been engaged in this dispute with the Americans for a number of years. We know that we have a good case and a good legal defence. However, we still do not have adequate financial support. Today again, we do not see this will, because the government refuses to pass the bill now before us, and because the program it unveiled today is clearly inadequate.

Several months ago, it was announced that legal costs would be covered, but we are still not able to do that. When a nice political statement is made, such as announcing that the associations' legal costs will be covered, among other measures, it provides some oxygen. Then, month after month we expect a cheque that never comes. In the end, there is no assistance. No support is provided.

Even though a plan was announced, we are forced to raise the issue again today because industry people are still waiting for something in writing to take to their bankers, confirming that the government is guaranteeing that the legal costs will be covered. This way, they could ask them to give them a chance with their lines of credit. We are still waiting for that announcement to be made.

It is obvious that the Quebec forestry industry and the Government of Quebec are disappointed. They are not happy with the action plan announced by the federal government. For one thing, it came too late. We had to stay on its case for more than two years. The Bloc Québécois has asked for a plan repeatedly in this House. I have lost count of the number of questions we have put—20, 25, 30 or 50 perhaps—to have the government provide loan guarantees. Finally, it is announced that guarantees will be provided, but only to the tune of \$800 million on a total of \$5 billion; that is 16%. For each \$100 in duties paid to the U.S., the Canadian government will guarantee \$16. This will leave \$84 unguaranteed.

During the negotiations that will take place to recover that money, the Americans will realize that the Canadian government does not want to take risks. It expects to get \$800 million out of \$5 billion, and to recover 16% of the money. The Americans may adopt an inflexible position and say that they will not pay the \$5 billion, or that they will not even pay 50% of that amount. Ultimately, that position would be very damaging, considering there is no reason why that money should remain in the Americans' pockets.

I will conclude by saying that the hon. member's initiative deserves to be supported. The government should have taken into consideration all the suggestions made to help the industry much sooner, and it should also have taken into consideration the questions that we kept repeating in the House. For a long time, we were told that loan guarantees could not be provided, that this could not be done because it was not legal and it would violate international agreements. It does not violate international agreements. The government decided to do it, but not to the degree that is required. In the same spirit, it should have adopted the bill.

The Bloc Québécois supports the bill before us today. It provides an additional tool that would allow our softwood industry to get by. The industry really needs this measure. Today, in light of its reaction to the federal assistance plan that was announced, we can see that this plan is not satisfactory to the industry. It will not allow it to make it through the crisis without being hurt. This will result in less money spent on research and development, reduced competitiveness and fewer jobs.

By the end of the crisis we will have won our case, and while we may congratulate ourselves then, there will not be any company or workers around to benefit from that victory. This is why we should pass the bill that is now before the House.

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to speak in the debate on Bill C-364, the trade compensation act. I want to compliment the member from northern Alberta for introducing this bill. It is an important contribution to the discussion that we have had around the softwood lumber dispute. In the first hour of debate our party's trade critic spoke in favour of this bill.

Private Members' Business

The bill is an act to provide compensation to Canadian industry associations and Canadian exporters who incur financial loss as a result of unjustified restrictive trade actions by foreign governments which are signatories to trade agreements involving Canadian products. It is in response to the softwood lumber situation that we have had recently in Canada.

Unfortunately, Canadians have seen that the Liberal government has done nothing to resolve the softwood lumber dispute. It has hung workers and their families out to dry. It has hung Canadian communities out to dry. It has hung exporters and industry associations out to dry with the legal expenses they have incurred over this dispute.

Four million dollars a day bleeds to the U.S. due to the illegal tariffs imposed on Canadian lumber. This is not a new occurrence; it has been going on for years. Over \$5 billion has been illegally collected by the United States, despite Canada having won judgment after judgment, including NAFTA's binding dispute resolution mechanism.

It is not just an issue of timeliness in trade negotiations, as the parliamentary secretary would like us to believe. It is a question of whether or not these agreements are working at all to the benefit of Canadians, or working as they were intended to work.

We have also heard concerns that the Liberal government may be prepared to bargain away some of that \$5 billion to negotiate with the Americans on the issue of how much is exactly owed to Canadians because of this dispute. It is appalling if that willingness is there. That money is owed to Canadians and should be paid. This agreement should be made to work the way it was intended to work.

We have heard that exporters and industry associations have had to ante up \$350 million for their legal fees because of this dispute. We agree that assistance should be offered to them given this extraordinary situation, given the U.S.'s intransigence on the issues around softwood lumber and given the inaction of the Liberal government.

It was only today, days before the fall of the Liberal government, that an aid package was announced around softwood lumber. Unfortunately, it is too little, too late. It is hard to believe that this dispute has gone on for years, that it has affected communities the way it has, that it has affected workers the way it has, that it has affected businesses the way it has, and it was only today, days before the fall of the government, that we heard about some measures to deal with the situation. That is not acceptable. This has been an urgent priority for many Canadians, particularly British Columbians. To have it ignored until this late time is absolutely unacceptable. It is another reason that I think British Columbians, and not just members of the opposition here in the House, lack confidence in the government.

British Columbia has been hard hit by the softwood lumber dispute. As I said, jobs have been lost. I heard the other day from a member of the B.C. legislature that at least 17 mills have closed recently. Family incomes have been shattered. There has been economic fallout for other businesses. The economic well-being of many communities in the interior of British Columbia depend on the

lumber industry. We have seen those businesses badly affected by this dispute.

What did the Liberals do? They made a few phone calls, after taking months to find the President's number. President Bush did not get a phone call for many months. Many times in the House members of the opposition rose to urge the Prime Minister to take some action. He put off that phone call for many months. He could not find the phone number, I suppose.

What is the Prime Minister doing now? He said that he raised the issue with the President and that he raised it at the recent APEC meeting. What is doing now? He is threatening more talk. As my leader said in the House the other day, it seems the only weapon the Liberals have to wield in this dispute with the United States is a broken record that threatens more talk and the same talk over and over again.

● (1745)

That is just not acceptable. The people in British Columbia know this is not an acceptable way of resolving this dispute. People in British Columbia have close ties to the United States. They know what it means to live next door to the U.S. They want action. They are not afraid of standing up to the Americans and saying that this situation is unacceptable. They are not afraid of taking some action that would press the Americans and show them that we are serious about this. British Columbians are not afraid, for instance, of a levy on our energy exports. They know that would get the attention of the Americans in this dispute.

People in British Columbia also are not afraid of raising the whole issue of the takeover of Terasen gas utility by the Americans and putting some restrictions on that. We have the third largest utility in Canada being taken over by Kinder Morgan, an American company, without a protest from Canada. That is despite the fact that over 8,000 British Columbians wrote to the B.C. Utilities Commission to raise serious questions about the takeover of this company, a company that was for many years a public company in British Columbia. For many years, it was prevented from being owned by foreign interests. That was all changed by the current B.C. Liberal government.

Those who wrote to the B.C. Utilities Commission called for action on this and for public hearings. The B.C. Utilities Commission dismissed all their questions and refused to hold public hearings.

We were hopeful that the federal government, through Investment Canada, through the Foreign Investment Review Agency, might take some action as well, but alas, it too caved and said that there was no reason this takeover should not go ahead. It is typical. Eleven thousand takeovers have happened with absolutely no action by Investment Canada. I guess it was a false hope on our part that maybe at this point it would have found the courage to act on behalf of Canadians and in the interests of Canadians.

Private Members' Business

Many Canadians are worried about this takeover, not only because Terasen is the major oil and gas pipeline and a major provider of gas to over 800,000 customers in B.C. and Alberta. They also are worried because of its interest in water systems in our municipalities. Terasen owns the municipal water systems in over a dozen municipalities in Canada, notably those in Calgary and Kelowna. Many British Columbians and Canadians are worried about the foothold a foreign-owned company, Kinder Morgan, would have on our water systems in Canada and what that would mean in terms of free trade and control of our water resource.

Very serious issues surround the takeover of Terasen. We have protested it in the New Democratic Party. Many British Columbians have protested it. The NDP caucus in the B.C. legislature has worked hard on this and has protested it there. We believe this is one of the areas where our government could have chosen to exercise some pressure on the United States. That pressure could have led to a resolution of the problems on softwood lumber. Without some kind of action on the part of Canada, more than just talk, the Americans will not budge. We all know that is the reality of our relationship with the United States.

Last summer the NDP asked that Parliament to be recalled early to deal with the crisis in softwood lumber. We were prepared to come back from our constituencies to get to work here in the House to resolve this issue. The Liberals rejected that suggestion and nothing was done.

We called for energy levies and nothing was done. We called for an end to the NAFTA-plus negotiations. We are in a situation where the government is actively negotiating an extension of the NAFTA. What kind of craziness is that, when the current agreement is not working for Canadians in such a dramatic fashion?

We believe the bill is an important contribution to the whole discussion around the softwood lumber dispute and that it makes an important suggestion about how assistance might properly be provided to companies that are badly affected by this. We are prepared to see that go forward and be discussed further.

• (1750)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in the debate on Bill C-364. One reason why I want to speak on this is it has been put forth by the hard-working member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

One might ask what is the connection between the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl and the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca. There are very few Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who do not have someone in Fort McMurray. Because of what has happened in our own province over the years, due to government neglect and mismanagement, many of our young people have had to leave and go west. Fort McMurray is the third largest Newfoundland community. That will give members an idea of how many of our people are in Fort McMurray. Any interests which the member for Fort McMurray has, is an interest for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The other question people might ask is why am I speaking to the bill. Even though it does not mention softwood lumber, most of us are aware that the big issue around which the legislation is built is

the softwood lumber dispute and the shafting the producers and exporters have had because of government inaction.

I do not have a lot of softwood exporters or producers in my riding. It is more or less an urban riding now. When I had the rural section of it, we did not have many trees and the ones we had certainly were not very big. It has not been an issue with which I have had direct contact. However, we have many softwood producers as well as exporters in the province. Mainly they are in the area of two Liberal members of Parliament, and I will not draw attention to them. They are in Newfoundland and Labrador today making a political announcement on infrastructure, one that was made in Newfoundland and Labrador about a month ago. When an election is coming, Liberals love to make the same announcement twice, maybe three times or four times.

The funny thing about today is when the two members arrived in Newfoundland and Labrador to make the announcement, they arrived independent of each other, each not knowing the other was coming. Apparently both showed up to make the same big announcement. On our local stations this evening there is quite a story on how the members of Parliament could not get their act together.

Since they could not be here, someone has to stand up for Newfoundland and Labrador. We have found that is common practice.

The major concern the bill points to is the period after having signed a free trade agreement, an agreement which the government opposite said originally it would never support. When free trade was introduced by the Mulroney government, the Liberals at the time not only said they would not support it, they said that if were ever elected, there would be no free trade. We all know they said the same thing about GST.

They were elected, and we have free trade and GST. It is a good thing we do. These days the only thing the Liberals can crow about is the fact that we have a surplus. We have had one for a few years. Looking ahead, if the Liberals do not squander it all, which they are certainly doing these days, we will continue to have a surplus. However, they talk about the great fiscal policies.

We know how we really got the surplus. The surplus came to us because of three programs, the main one being free trade. There is no one in the country who doubts that free trade gave us most of the money that we now receive. Second, is the GST, and no one likes it. The government was going to get rid of it, but it brought in a lot of money. It helped balance the budget.

• (1755)

We on this side of the House, leading into the Christmas season, cannot take all the credit for bringing in the plan to address the major deficit of the past, a deficit we inherited from the Trudeau government, which grew when interest rates went up over 20%. However, we had the plan. It was free trade and GST, and it addressed the deficit.

Private Members' Business

Let us give the Liberals credit for their contribution. They also contributed to creating the surplus. They cut social programs. That was their major contribution to the deficit. All we have to do is look at what happened to our health and education transfers over the years under the Liberal government. The social programs across the country have been cut and cut. Now in the last few days we have seen billions of dollars going back into them without any management plan.

Having given the Liberals all the credit they are due, let us look at the situation at hand.

Producers and exporters have an amount of \$5 billion sitting outside their pockets and outside the country, which they should have if there were any leadership by the government or any international presence. We are a joke on the international stage.

I want to get away from the softwood lumber issue for a minute because everybody else is talking about it, about duties and about the lack of ability by government to get the countries which have signed the NAFTA, the United States in this case, to live up to the agreement. It is inconceivable. It just lack of leadership.

Let us go to another issue. Back about four years ago, we on this side of the House, and some of us down in the corner at the time, consistently asked the international trade minister when he would address the upcoming softwood lumber negotiations. He would say, and the record will show, that we should worry about it, that Canada had never lost an international ruling. It was not going to be an issue. Suddenly, the time period was up. What happened? All we have to do is ask our exporters and our producers. The government fiddled while Rome was burning.

At the same time, we also asked him questions about the tariff on shrimp going into the European market. If Canadian shrimp is cooked and peeled here, when it is sent to the European markets, it is subjected to a 20% tariff. One might say that the Europeans can afford it. If that were all there was to it, it would not be problem. The problem is in our kindness we give huge allocations of shrimp to the same European countries that are blocking our excess to the markets. They can go home duty free and put their shrimp into the same markets we sell our shrimp at 20% less than we can do it. Every time the quotas off our coast are increased, Canada is the major beneficiary, but the foreign countries get a quota also.

The thing about Canada is we fish what we are given. They fish sometimes up to 10 times as much as they are given. Last year when Denmark was given a quota, it used the objection procedures and said that it did not accept that. It said that it would fish 10 times more than it was given. The Danish fished seven times more, and that is on paper. We can imagine how much they really fished.

What is happening to Danish shrimp? It is going into the European markets. Who is really blocking Canada? Who is really trying to ensure that 20% tariff stays? The Danish. What are we doing about it? There are people in the country who could say what we are more quickly and in fewer words. However, we are doing absolutely nothing. It is the same thing we are doing about the softwood lumber. We are showing no presence on the international stage. We are becoming the laughing stock of the world, and our people are the ones who are suffering.

● (1800)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this private members' bill brought forward by my friend, the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

Bill C-364 is about giving compensation to Canadian companies that incur financial losses as a result of unjustified and restrictive trade actions by foreign governments that are signatories to trade agreements involving Canadian products.

We all know that Canada is a trading nation. Close to half of our GDP is from international trade. It is very important for us to have a rules based system to ensure that we, with a smaller population, do have access to world markets, but under a fair trade system.

For that reason, the Canadian government, including the opposition, have always been fighting to ensure we have what we call fair trading rules. Therefore we give a high level of support to the WTO and to other trade agreements. It is our desire to carry on with these free trade agreements which we are now conducting with Japan and which we hope in the future to conduct with India as well.

I have attended the WTO meetings in Seattle and Doha in the past to ensure that Canada was well represented and to ensure we received a fair rules based system for our Canadian exporters and for our markets.

Hopefully, my colleague from Macleod will be going to Hong Kong for the next WTO meeting, even if the election is on the horizon. It is important for Canada's voice to be heard there. My colleague from Macleod has done a tremendous job in ensuring Canada is heard. I hope he does go there and brings Canada's voice to the WTO meeting.

There is no question that protectionism is growing around the world and it keeps growing. Even with the WTO meeting, we can see that the agricultural subsidies that are being given by the European Union and the U.S.A. are under scrutiny and attack by everyone because it distorts the market.

Canada is trying to get a rules based system. What about the Third World countries that cannot get a rules based system? These countries rely on the WTO. Henceforth, they are demanding at the WTO to have agricultural subsidies removed in order to have fair trade.

Canada has announced that it will be forgiving debt to Third World countries. Canada has announced that it is giving foreign aid and that it is raising its foreign aid commitment, but at the same time it is not opening up the market. I am happy to say that Canada has opened up that market but other countries in the European Union have not opened up their markets.

I watched a documentary recently on Lake Victoria in East Africa, the country from which I come, and the huge amount of fish that is caught that cannot be exported to the European Union due to restrictive measures. Just imagine what would happen if all this fish could be exported to the European Union. We could see the whole economic condition change. These people would not then be needing any foreign aid because they would be able to compete on the world market and go on with their business.

Private Members' Business

As a member of Parliament I have sat for eight years on the foreign affairs committee. I have seen countries not open up their markets. It is very difficult to get countries to open up their market because of national interests and the domestic markets.

When NAFTA was signed we thought we had a great agreement. We went around the world saying that NAFTA was the kind of agreement countries should have for a free trade agreement. We touted NAFTA as one of those excellent trade agreements that a country could have. Lo and behold, the ruling on the softwood lumber that the U.S.A. is ignoring now has come as a deep shock to everyone here who has been fighting for free trade.

• (1805)

Mr. Bush himself has been saying that he loves free trade. Everybody has been saying they love free trade. It is quite interesting that he was in Buenos Aires recently talking about the free trade of the Americas and yet we have a free trade agreement with him and he is having difficulty even fulfilling that portion of the agreement.

One may ask why we would extend more free trade agreements, why anybody would put credence into the U.S.A. opening up its markets when it cannot even fulfill the NAFTA agreement, which was unanimous on softwood lumber. Today speakers have all identified what has happened with softwood lumber and all the duties that the U.S. is getting.

That leads us to the main point, which is where does the burden fall? The burden should fall on the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada should be fighting for these trade agreements that we sign and stand up for them. Unfortunately, it falls on Canadian companies to take up the legal challenges. It falls on Canadian companies to pay these duties which are now under dispute.

Today, on the eve of the election, an announcement was made that the federal Liberals are going to do something about softwood lumber. We are talking about the duties. It is amazing that an announcement is made on the eve of a general election. It is also after pressure was applied by the three opposition parties. They said that they wanted a definite response from the government and wanted to see what it has done. As we know, all three of them agreed on that.

Nevertheless, there is this business of making promises at election time, getting elected and then not keeping the promises, which is what the Liberal Party has been doing for many years. We see a repetition of the same thing. It is making promises.

What we need is legislation not promises. We need legislation that will address this deficiency that exists, which is how long Canadian companies can carry the burden of what we sign with the U.S. Once we sign these free trade agreements we come across these restrictive practices, which will keep coming no matter what.

This is something we will always fight in domestic markets to international markets. These disputes are going to keep coming so we need a mechanism in place so that industry, government, everybody involved has a cohesive approach to address this issue when these things arise. We should never be caught again with what happened with softwood lumber. We sat down and agreed to

NAFTA. Now we find that one partner of NAFTA is not adhering to the decision that it agreed to sign.

I was in Calgary when the President of Mexico was there and he agreed with us too. However, combining Mexico and Canada, we still do not have the huge power that the U.S.A. has, which is the reason NAFTA was established.

What do we do? We are bringing in legislation to ensure that Canadian companies do not suffer unnecessarily or do not go under while these wars are taking place, while we are fighting these things through tribunals, court actions and all the mechanisms that we are establishing in the international market to ensure there is a good rules based system that is applicable to everyone so that we are not bullied by a larger economy, which is always the case.

I just came back from a trade mission in Central Europe, which has just joined the European Union which has again become a large economic block. On one side we have the U.S. market, which is a large economic block, and on the other we have the European Union, which is a large economic block. Therefore we need to ensure that we have mechanisms to help us fight.

In conclusion, I am very happy that my friend brought the bill forward and that the matter can be resolved and sent to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

• (1810)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The member moving the motion has a five minute right of reply to conclude the debate. The hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the House today to this bill, the trade compensation act, which would help so many people in Canada involved in exports, including lumber, cattle or whatever it may be. I think the bill would certainly help our companies internationally to compete more effectively and make international companies and other countries realize that Canadians are serious about supporting our industry.

I first want to thank my colleagues for their support and input, including the members for Vancouver Island North, Calgary East and St. John's South—Mount Pearl. I especially want to say to my friend from St. John's South—Mount Pearl that the more Newfoundlanders who would come to Fort McMurray, either permanently or temporarily, would be most welcome to work in the many high paying jobs in that area.

Finally, I wish to thank my leader, the member for Calgary Southwest, for his support, his hard work and his leadership. I can assure Canadians that with his leadership and example I believe we would be much better off as a country.

As well, the situation speaks volumes about the government and its role when it takes a Conservative member of Parliament to introduce legislation that would offer real support to Canadian industry, especially industries that have been so often placated and so often abused by foreign countries that are taking advantage of their own internal legislation to put our exporters at risk in their own jobs.

This trade dispute has especially devastated the Quebec forest industry and the B.C. forest industry. I think it is our role as Canadian parliamentarians to stand up for Canadians throughout Canada, wherever they may be, to ensure they are fairly treated.

The bill offers tangible, concrete support to our exporters. It offers them the help they so desperately need right now. The bill in fact should have been introduced by the government and it should have been introduced a long time ago.

What we have before us is a bill that is unanimously supported by all opposition parties. No member, I understand, from any of the opposition parties takes exception to the bill or what it sets out. Some 65% of Canadians are supporting this type of bill and this particular bill. I would suggest, if we look at the members opposite from northern Ontario, Quebec and B.C., they would have no choice but to support the bill and it would pass with a large number of members supporting it if the government would provide it with a royal recommendation.

I think voters should ask themselves why the Liberal government is not allowing the bill to proceed. I would suggest that they ask that question especially during any time that they have the opportunity to tell the government how they feel about supporting Canadians and supporting Canadian industry.

The government is playing politics with softwood lumber producers' lives, with exporters of cattle, with exporters of all types of industries across Canada. I suppose the best that workers affected by these actions can hope for is a deathbed conversion by the Liberal government and perhaps it will make an announcement.

But wait. The government actually has \$1.5 billion that it announced just recently for softwood lumber. But what is it for? It is for retraining unemployed softwood workers, people who are unemployed and cannot find jobs because the government will not support the industry. It is for finding other markets.

What I find is that the Liberal government's answer to this particular crisis in industry is to retrain workers for other jobs and to actually throw more money at bureaucrats to find other markets. Does this mean the world is not aware that we sell wood? Do we not compete in markets around the world currently? Do we have to now buy our customers or is the Liberal government using this money to explore the solar system to establish new markets where they have no earthly competition?

Most likely this \$1.5 billion, like most Liberal promises, will indeed go to the solar system. It will disappear in smoke never to be seen or heard from again, another bad use of taxpayer money.

I submit that the workers and the industry in Canada deserve better. They deserve a government that will stand up for our country, for our exporters and take immediate action on issues, not wait and wait and make announcements that have no substance. They deserve a Conservative government.

It has been decided that we need a royal recommendation. I do not appreciate that answer, Mr. Speaker, but I appreciated you looking into it. The questions Canadians need to ask themselves are: Why will the Liberal government not provide a royal recommendation? Why will the Liberal government not answer to Parliament, to the

65% of Canadians represented in this Parliament who want this bill to go ahead? Why are the Liberals opposing it at this stage? I would suggest that they will not because they will not cooperate with the rest of Parliament.

•(1815)

If the Conservatives form the government, we will cooperate with the rest of the parties. We will get work done and we will work for Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 30, 2005, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Ted Menzies (MacLeod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on a question to which I did not get an adequate answer. The question I am referring to was on softwood lumber. We have had a lot of discussions in the last little while about softwood lumber, but we would all have to agree that we probably have not heard the end of the debate. I am not the only one certainly on this side of the House who feels there has not been an adequate answer to that question.

I would have to echo the comments we are hearing from the industry itself. It has been mentioned by some of the members here this evening that the industry has been left to defend itself.

Adjournment Proceedings

Many, many questions have been asked in the House in the last few months about what the Liberal government is planning to do to help the softwood lumber industry. Frankly, we have not heard an adequate answer. The industry has not heard an adequate answer.

Today we heard the announcement of \$1.5 billion. I am not too sure where it is coming from, but it was another surprise announcement. Will this solve the problem? Absolutely not. There was criticism all across the country from the industry that it does not solve the fundamental problem. Once again it is a band-aid fix on a much larger problem.

The Americans still have \$5 billion-plus of Canadian softwood industry money. I have spent time in Washington talking to congressmen. A number of Conservative members of Parliament have travelled to Washington to talk to congressmen to find only that these congressmen really do not understand the issue. They have not been lobbied by the Government of Canada. They have not been informed of how much this is hurting these industries in Canada. They encouraged us in the opposition to speak louder than our government has, because even they felt that our government was not representing that Canadian industry.

We have tried, but maybe when we come back here in the new year as the government, we will be able to do something other than just throw money at the situation. We have not seen this money in any one of the three budgets so far this year. We would like to know where the money is coming from and how it will fix the problem. The way we on this side of the House see it, this will not fix the problem.

I have not mentioned many of the other issues at which the government has failed. There is a long list, but I have less than a minute to say that we have not solved the BSE problem. The shrimp producers in Newfoundland are still facing a 20% tariff in Europe. I do not think I have heard the trade minister even mention that issue. A lot of issues have not been addressed. These are only a few.

• (1820)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has been consistently clear in its message to the United States on softwood lumber: revoke the duty orders, refund the deposits and respect the NAFTA obligations.

Ever since the United States imposed crippling duties on Canadian softwood lumber in 2002, this government has worked tirelessly to have those duties overturned. Canadians know that we have fought and fought in the international arena and we have won and won, but our overriding concern in this dispute is to find a durable, long term solution. As such, the government has always been willing to negotiate a long term solution, but Canada suspended negotiations after the United States refused to abide by the NAFTA extraordinary challenge committee decision.

On August 10 the ECC unanimously affirmed that Canada's softwood lumber posed no threat of injury to the U.S. producers. This means that the United States is legally obligated to revoke duties and refund deposits. Nevertheless, the U.S. government dismissed the decision and claimed that on the basis of a legal technicality, it would continue to apply duties to Canadian softwood lumber.

We have raised the issue with the United States at the highest political levels. The Prime Minister made it very clear to President Bush that we expect the United States to respect its international trade obligations. In fact, as members know, very recently he did so courageously, not only in private with the President, but in the public international trade forum.

The Minister of International Trade has spoken with his counterparts numerous times to express Canada's strong concern over U.S. inaction on the lumber file. Ambassador McKenna and our consuls general in the United States are engaged in enhanced advocacy activities. The government is moving full speed ahead with lumber litigation before the U.S. Court of International Trade, the NAFTA and the WTO. We recently won another great victory in a NAFTA subsidy case, and Canadians were celebrating when the Department of Commerce finally complied with NAFTA panel instructions.

The government has taken strong action to support the industry while this has been occurring. In 2002-03 we funded FPAC advocacy. We funded \$3 million for our Washington embassy advocacy work, the industry associations' litigation and worker assistance. We funded the Canada export program, R and D, value added research, mountain pine beetle work, the centre of excellence for pulp and paper, the boreal forest research consortium and the softwood industry community economic adjustment initiative for a total of \$356 million.

In the next two years we funded the industry associations for litigation. We allocated in the four years I have been talking about, the following: forestry, \$20 million; forest research, \$325,000; mountain pine beetle, another \$100 million; and community support in Quebec, \$50 million. A total of \$526 million was allocated.

I have to congratulate the forestry caucus in the Liberal Party because they worked for months. We agree with other parties on loan guarantees, but that is not all. We put in many more ideas. We put in money so there are long term, lasting solutions for competitiveness. We put money in for bioenergy, for accelerated capital cost allowances, for forestry innovations and value added to expand our markets around the world, for skills training including hiring youth and under-represented groups, for helping communities to adjust, and industry support for small businesses.

The government's message is clear to the United States. The United States must abide by international obligations. We are sending the message to the United States administration and the American people that the Americans can no longer be under the illusion about what this government wants on softwood lumber. We want an end to the illegal U.S. duties and a refund of the duties that have been collected.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1825)

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, it does not surprise me when we hear a litany of dollar values thrown at the industry. I do not think that is the point. Government members can stand up and bluster all they want but it has not been effective.

What I observed was our Prime Minister waiting two months to even phone the President to raise the issue. It was long, long overdue.

I have never found it very effective to negotiate or to even talk about an issue when one cannot even pick up the phone and call the person with whom one is having the disagreement. It is most unfortunate that our Prime Minister has never actually had a formal meeting with the President to discuss softwood lumber. Why—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, what has been most embarrassing in this debate is not that the NDP, the Conservatives and the Bloc were doing nothing while the government was doing a whole list of items for 2003-04, including all our negotiations and all our efforts.

What is most embarrassing is that their party critics did not even know about all the activities that I have outlined today. We have had a number of emergency debates. Those members do not accept the fact that any of these things were going on. They do not even realize what is being done. How could they have a good debate?

The member suggested that the congressmen did not know. The president of the Canada-U.S. parliamentary association is a member of the Conservative Party. If U.S. congressmen do not know, then that member should speak to that president, who is a member of his party.

NATIONAL PAROLE BOARD

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I notice on the agenda that my adjournment topic is stated as the National Parole Board. That is not really what my concern is, but if we want to talk about the parole board that is fine with me.

My concern is that a convicted pedophile, convicted 42 times, was released back into society, moved to a community called Merritt, not far from mine, was forced to leave there by the people of Merritt and came to Kamloops instead.

He has 42 convictions. We do not have a list of all the times he has been arrested for many misdeeds, but he has been convicted 42 times. That is simply convictions. He has destroyed the lives of more children than I would care to think about. He has also destroyed the lives of their parents and other members of their family.

I cannot for the life of me understand how a government would see fit to release into society someone who has refused to undergo rehabilitation every time it has been offered. The onus is now on my local RCMP detachment to watch this man 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to make certain he does not commit another crime. We all know that it is only a matter of time until he commits another crime. He is a walking time bomb.

Someone who refuses treatment should not be allowed to be at large in a community. I understand that he served his time. I respect that. The law says we must release him. But the law should also say that if someone refuses to take treatment, and in fact refuses to even admit that he has done anything wrong, there has to be some sort of caveat attached to his release. This is not happening.

This man, David Caza, is currently living in a halfway house in the City of Kamloops. He is living three blocks away from no less than three elementary schools. If members think that parents in the city of Kamloops are not very concerned about this man's presence, they can think again. A day does not go by that I do not get telephone calls from concerned parents asking me what I can do about this. Frustrated, I have to tell them there is nothing I can do because that is the law. The law is wrong, but it is nonetheless the law.

An RCMP officer has been assigned to watch this man at all times, so our RCMP detachment is unable to have the assigned officer perform other very necessary tasks in our community. I do not understand how this works. I have one serious concern. This man has no relatives in my area. He has no prospects for a job in my area. Why did he come to our area? How is that allowed?

The government has had 12 years to put something into effect that would protect children and families in this country. It has failed miserably to do so. The response I received from the Deputy Prime Minister was inadequate. At one point in your life as a Liberal, you are going to have to take responsibility for your actions and your party's inaction. I fail to see that happening so far. I look forward to the minister's response.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I have to assume that the hon. member was directing her comments to the Chair, but in her last minute, she can correct that.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her attention to this matter. Privacy concerns would usually constrain me from directly discussing the specifics of any individual offender's case. In this instance, however, we know through the media that the offender in question served a 10 month sentence in a provincial institution and was thereafter released, as required by law.

I must point out that the administration of justice through the police, crown attorneys and the courts, as well as the custody of offenders serving sentences of less than two years, is a provincial responsibility.

As I have said, we are aware of the recent release that disturbed several communities in British Columbia. It is recognized also that such occurrences can be traumatic and we particularly extend our sympathy to the victims and their families who have been directly affected by this offender's criminal activities.

Adjournment Proceedings

●(1835)

[Translation]

As the hon. opposition member surely realizes, preventing recidivism among sexual offenders requires a multidimensional approach.

[English]

Over the past several years, the federal government has introduced several legislative and policy initiatives to deal with sexual and other violent offenders.

An offender can be declared a long term offender at the time of sentencing, meaning that the offender can receive up to 10 years' community supervision in addition to a prison term of at least two years. An offender can also be declared a dangerous offender at the time of sentencing, meaning that the offender can be held in prison indefinitely and be subject to lifetime supervision. Sexual and other violent offenders can be detained, i.e. not released from custody, until the end of their sentences.

Where the Correctional Service of Canada has reasonable grounds to believe that an inmate who is about to be released will pose a threat to any person, the Correctional Service of Canada is required to give the police, prior to release, all information that is relevant to that perceived threat. A national flagging system is in place that can be used by prosecutors to flag on CPIC individuals who are potential future dangerous offenders.

Judges may also, under certain circumstances—for example, violent offences—delay parole eligibility until one-half of the sentence. Police or any other person, on reasonable grounds, can ask the courts to apply a peace bond to sexual and other violent offenders in the community with a wide range of conditions to restrict their movements, report to police, or reside at a particular location, for example.

A national screening system is in place that allows the criminal record history to be used to screen for persons seeking child-sensitive positions or positions of trust.

[Translation]

These measures are an efficient and comprehensive approach to deal with high risk sexual offenders.

[English]

This being said, public safety remains our number one priority. This government will continue to look at innovative measures to enhance the correctional and parole system.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying to the parliamentary secretary there is no doubt in my mind that for everyone along the way, from the parole board to all of the people who have to hear all of these cases, to the courts and to the lawyers, I believe with all my heart that they followed the rules that are in place and did not skip any steps. That is exactly the point I am trying to make.

The rules are a federal responsibility. Once again, the member across the way said at the very beginning of his statement that it is a provincial responsibility. That is exactly what I was referring to. It is

time you stood in your place and took responsibility as the federal government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I will remind the hon. member again of how to address her remarks.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: Mr. Speaker, I beg your pardon. I am used to debate.

Let me remind the hon. member across the way that we must take responsibility when we hold a position of trust, which is what we do here as members of Parliament. We must take responsibility for putting in place laws that can be followed and will protect people. This law is not and the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo probably knows that the Deputy Prime Minister and this government are also concerned about sentencing and parole. The Deputy Prime Minister has asked the justice committee to do a review of sentencing and parole. In fact, the committee has agreed to set up a subcommittee to do exactly that.

Unfortunately, we are going into an election and that subcommittee was scheduled to start in mid-December. Now it will have to begin following the election, but the government is committed to reviewing sentencing and parole. Now it will have to happen after the election.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month I asked some questions about a tragedy that happened off our shores earlier this year when the fishing boat, the *Melina and Keith II*, sank with a loss of four lives. The amount of time it took search and rescue to get to the site was thoroughly unacceptable.

I know the parliamentary secretary is going to get up soon and read the prepared script, but before he does, I want him to listen to some of the facts, which I usually do not read into the record.

It took over four hours for search and rescue to reach the *Melina and Keith*. The beacon was released at approximately 3:26 p.m. Search and rescue was aware of that, but had to determine the validity of the distress call. It took them approximately 40 minutes. They had to call around to different people to try to find out whether or not this was legitimate, including family members of the crew. That was unnecessary, as I will mention in a moment.

Why was the crew, which was on duty at 3:26 p.m. and would not leave until 4, allowed to leave when it was known that there was distress at sea?

The position was determined shortly after 4, shortly after the crew was allowed to go home. Search and rescue, as I mentioned, had called around, trying to determine whether or not the *Melina and Keith* was at sea and roughly where it was so that the distress call could be validated. Family members, as I mentioned, were called.

Adjournment Proceedings

Each boat at sea in that class has a black box. It is required. This lets DFO, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, know the location at all times. The position is updated every hour. The *Melina and Keith* was fishing fixed gear, gill nets. It moved less than a mile in the three hour period and DFO knew exactly where it was. During all the time search and rescue was calling around, spending 40 minutes to determine the location, DFO could have told them in seconds where the *Melina and Keith* was if these departments had been coordinated.

To add insult to injury, the DFO surveillance plane was in the air at that time, flying in or near the Bonavista corridor. The operators heard about the incident. They asked permission to fly over the distress area not once but twice. They were told, "It's in hand. It's covered. You don't have to go there".

The plane could have drawn attention to nearby boats and a rescue could have been effected hours earlier. Fifteen minutes of time saved would have saved one life. Twenty-five minutes would have saved at least two lives.

Meanwhile, back on shore, once the 40 minutes had elapsed and position had been determined, it took the search and rescue crew one hour and 55 minutes after the location had been determined, for a total of over two and a half hours, to get a chopper off the ground. This is unacceptable.

We have a search and rescue unit operating eight hours a day, five days a week, with other crews on standby. Standby is no good in a place like Newfoundland.

As we speak this evening, we have been informed that another tragedy has occurred off the coast of Newfoundland. Whether search and rescue could have done anything or did do anything there is not the case. We are talking about a case here where the time it took to respond cost lives. It should never ever happen again.

• (1840)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for raising this issue not only so the public can be aware that the appropriate times were followed but also to put good ideas on the record. As we are modernizing search and rescue and looking at what that can be done, hopefully we can look at the suggestions he has made.

Due to its vast territorial waters, the world's longest coastline, and harsh climate, Canada has one of the most challenging environments in the world when it comes to search and rescue missions. Our personnel and aircraft resources allocated to search and rescue are positioned to provide the best possible levels of service with the resources available.

The national search and rescue policy states that the primary search and rescue aircraft, the Cormorant helicopter, the Hercules aircraft and the Buffalo aircraft, will normally maintain a state of readiness such that they can be airborne within 30 minutes during peak hours and within two hours during quiet times. In the vast majority of cases, search and rescue crews respond faster than those mandated response times.

The Canadian Forces search and rescue teams always respond as quickly as possible to any distress call. In this instance, the Cormorant crew responded in one hour and 20 minutes, well within the mandated response time. It took an additional one hour and 13 minutes for the Cormorant to fly from its base in Gander, Newfoundland to the site of the sinking. The search and rescue team arrived as quickly as it could but, unfortunately, even with its best efforts, the ship had sunk.

In this instance, tragically, the Cormorant helicopter search and rescue crew was unable to save four of the eight people aboard the *Melina and Keith II*. As good as they are and as much as they strive to, our search and rescue crews are not always able to save all persons in distress. Our thoughts are with the families of those who perished in this storm.

Canadians can be assured, however, that our personnel and aircraft resources dedicated to search and rescue missions are carefully distributed to ensure the best level of service with the resources available.

Canadian Forces search and rescue squadrons maintain a search and rescue readiness state in accordance with national policy, which is issued under the joint authority of the Deputy Minister of National Defence, the Chief of Defence Staff and the Commissioner of the Canadian Coast Guard.

Our search and rescue readiness times are based on many years of search and rescue experience. Search and rescue readiness times can be realigned to coincide with periods of greatest search and rescue activity. In addition, any Canadian Forces aircraft can be called upon to perform search and rescue missions if the circumstances warrant.

I am sure the member is aware and will appreciate that we are also looking at enhancing and studying the entire system, and providing new aircraft, so that it will be even better although it is currently within the guidelines as the record shows. I hope in fact that he will support my interest. As the member for Yukon, when that review is done, it will result in at least one plane that could be used for search and rescue and perhaps other things north of 60.

The Canadian Forces has more than 700 members dedicated to search and rescue. They perform an essential task as first responders in rescue missions coast to coast to coast. They are dedicated professionals and Canadians can take pride in the job that they do for our country.

• (1845)

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of shooting the minister, nor do I have any intention of talking about the people who work in search and rescue. Every time they go to work, they put their lives at risk and do a great job.

Adjournment Proceedings

My target is the Department of National Defence and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for the lack of management and coordination. It does not matter how many resources we have or where they are placed if they are not managed properly.

This is a prime example of complete and utter mismanagement of resources in an area where we cannot afford to mismanage them. Because of complete and utter incompetence in this case, lives were lost. It should never happen again and to ensure it does not, I am asking the minister, on the record, to have a judicial inquiry into this incident.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, the member's suggestions need to be looked at. It is not only in recent times that there have been problems in government when various departments are involved.

We must look for a better way, especially in critical situations such as areas of surveillance and search and rescue on the east coast and

in the north. We have such huge areas there and so few resources that we need all government departments working with other governments and any other organizations that might have resources available. We must put them efficiently together in a network in order to save lives, such as in this case.

Certainly, I laud the member for bringing forth positive suggestions on how we might improve this situation. I hope that the people who have the power to make those changes will do that.

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:50 p.m.)

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