

As I said, Quebec has the legitimate and historical right to preserve a minimal political weight within the Canadian federation, even more so since we are not getting our fair share of federal transfers to provinces, whether it is for defence, for research and development or especially, as everyone knows, for job creation. Now Quebec could have its representation in the Canadian Parliament reduced.

Where was the Prime Minister, where was the hon. member for Papineau—Saint-Michel, where was the hon. member for Bonaventure—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, three outstanding Quebec citizens, when on a vote on March 28 the House rejected a motion put forward by my colleague from Bellechasse, which would have protected, once and for all, Quebec's political weight within this federation? They were away from the House at a time when they should have been here to vote with us on this issue.

The Speaker: My colleague, usually we refrain from referring to the fact that an hon. member is in the House or not. The hon. member may wish to rephrase his statement after question period.

It being 2 p.m., the House will now proceed to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

YOUNG ACHIEVERS AWARD

Mr. Andy Scott (Fredericton—York—Sunbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I extend congratulations to Measha Gosman on winning the YTV Young Achievers Award for 1995 in the vocal category.

Measha is a grade 12 student in my riding of Fredericton—York—Sunbury. She now holds the distinct position of being only the second of two people from Fredericton to receive this recognition in the six-year history of the award.

Constituents, New Brunswickers and her parents are obviously very proud.

Competition is fierce for the YTV award since only 15 are presented annually. Categories for the competition range from dance to entrepreneurship, and more than 1,000 young Canadians are nominated each year.

I look forward to seeing Measha at the awards ceremony here at the National Arts Centre tonight. On behalf of the people of Fredericton—York—Sunbury, I wish her well in her national television performance.

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development has once again shown a lack of consistency and vision when developing government policies that are supposed to protect citizens who are treated unfairly.

Last February, he tabled amendments to the Employment Equity Act. The commission's new responsibilities include enforcement of the Employment Equity Act, establishing an employment equity review tribunal and, last but not least, auditing reports submitted by private sector employers. According to the Human Rights Commissioner, the commission would need 15 new officers to carry out these new responsibilities.

The minister has probably forgotten that he himself closed the commission's regional offices and cut its budget by more than \$3 million. This makes no sense at all.

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[English]

THE DEBT

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the constituents of Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt to salute the residents of Salmo, British Columbia. These fine Canadians have decided to take action on the national debt. They have to because the Liberals have done nothing to reduce it, in fact they are increasing it.

The people of Salmo are collecting pennies to send to the debt reduction fund. While these good Canadians are scraping the bottom of the barrel, desk drawers and every nook and cranny, the Grits continue their spending binge.

The Canada Council handed out \$88 million in grants last year. One of the latest handouts is \$10,000 for a gay and lesbian film festival to be staged in Saskatoon this weekend by the Positively Queer group.

My heart goes out to the residents of Salmo. What will they do when they realize that they will have to collect one million pennies to pay for the Liberal government's financial support of the Positively Queer film festival? That is almost three tonnes of pennies. The Liberals should be ashamed.

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CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the National Council on Welfare reports that the number of poor