

Routine Proceedings

I think of the 50th anniversary of Dieppe, the 50th anniversary of the Italy campaign, the 50th anniversary of Hong Kong, the Battle of the Atlantic, and all the other campaigns and battles in which Canadians participated with equal courage.

• (1520)

Today is the 50th anniversary of D-Day and something which I think brings it all together because this was the last big push; this was the beginning of the end.

I am very glad to be able to rise on behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus to express our appreciation for the men and women who participated in the D-Day landings and to extend our warmest wishes to all the survivors who are here today in Ottawa and overseas with the Prime Minister.

I would like to particularly mention, if I might be parochial for a minute, the two Winnipeg regiments that participated in the D-Day landing, the Fort Gary Horse and the Royal Winnipeg Rifles.

Finally, as a young person I had an opportunity to go to Europe. The people of my generation went with packsacks on their backs, Canadian flags on their backs, hitchhiking or bicycling as the case may be. I first came face to face with the sacrifice that young Canadians of a previous generation made when I was cycling through Holland in May 1971. I saw a big cross and a monument. My friend and I stopped. We had a good look. It turned out we were in a place called Bergen-op-Zoom. There is a Canadian war cemetery with about 2,000 Canadians buried there.

We started to look around and seeing it was a Canadian war cemetery, we started to look at all the different headstones. It struck us, as we were 19 at the time, that most of the men lying there were the same age as we were. We could not leave until we had visited every grave. It took us a number of hours. We were captured by the weight of the images before us.

Ten years later as a member of Parliament I had an occasion to go to another Canadian war cemetery in Edegem. It struck me then, as it struck me when I returned again when I was 40 to Vimy, how really young these men were. I did not know how young they were the first time I was in a Canadian war cemetery because I was the same age as they were. Having looked again when I was 30 and again when I was 40, I realize what these people gave up and what they sacrificed. That is what we remember here today.

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MUNICIPAL GRANTS

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec): Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce today on behalf of the President of the Treasury Board that the federal government is lifting the freeze on the amount of grants in lieu of taxes which agent crown corporations pay to municipalities across Canada.

The decision to lift the freeze that applies to properties owned by agent crown corporations such as Canada Post and the CBC is retroactive to January 1, 1994.

[Translation]

The federal government's objective was to remove a major irritant in relations between municipalities and the federal government. This is the area in which municipalities have not collected their fair share of realty taxes since 1992. The amount available for paying these grants in lieu of taxes had been frozen since an announcement by the previous federal government.

[English]

The Minister of Public Works and Government Services will undertake a review of the municipal grants program so as to ensure that the fiscal relationship between the federal government and the municipalities is stable and predictable.

Finally, the federal government expects to face severe fiscal constraints in its 1995 budget. Municipalities have been asked to recognize this and refrain from taking advantage of the lifting of the freeze by targeting crown corporation properties for tax increases.

• (1525)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Bélisle (La Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is normal for the federal government to give grants to municipalities in return for their services to Crown corporations. To lift the freeze on these grants and continue to index them to inflation is only fair and should always have been done in the past.

The Minister of Finance tells us that the government expects to face severe fiscal constraints in its 1995 budget. His statement contains no surprise. Given the 1994 budget plan, all Canadian taxpayers will face harsh financial realities in 1995. What is really needed is a global and comprehensive review of the tax system and of all federal government spending, instead of what is being proposed today in the minister's statement.

[English]

Mr. Jim Silye (Calgary Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a compliment, although a qualified one, to the Minister of Finance for today's announcement regarding the lifting of the freeze on grants in lieu of taxes that crown corporations pay to municipalities.

Certainly governments should live up to their tax responsibilities if they expect the public to do so, especially since the Minister of National Revenue and taxation has just raised the interest from 6 per cent to 8 per cent on late payments on income tax payments.