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**Monday, October 24, 2005
(Part A)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 24, 2005

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ) moved that Bill C-301, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (monthly guaranteed income supplement), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before beginning today's private members' business, I have a statement to make concerning the provisions of Bill C-301, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (monthly guaranteed income supplement).

As with all private members' bills, the Chair examines the contents of the bill to determine whether 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. This is consistent with the duties and responsibilities assigned to the Chair. It has been the practice for such concerns to be raised at the commencement of debate on second reading.

[*English*]

Bill C-301 standing in the name of the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain proposes to alter the process by which compensation is awarded to old age security recipients in the manner that retroactivity is handled.

[*Translation*]

Clauses 2, 3 and 4 remove the requirement that the recipient must make an application before they can receive a payment. Henceforth, payments would be based simply on entitlement. This changes the conditions of the compensation process and creates new or additional spending. Arguably, it could also affect the minister's discretionary authority; however, this is not entirely clear.

Clause 6 awards full retroactivity. Currently, retroactivity is limited by the date upon which the application was made. Late

applicants may only be eligible for the period dating from the application. It would appear then that this modification authorizes increased spending which would require a royal recommendation.

Therefore, in its present form, I will decline to put the question on third reading of Bill C-301 unless a royal recommendation is received.

Today, the debate is on the motion for second reading, and this motion shall be put to a vote at the close of the second reading debate.

• (1105)

SECOND READING

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to initiate debate on Bill C-301, although what you have just said does not augur well for the process. It is not that I wish to contest your ruling, but when it is said that the bill involves money, we need to know whose money it is. In my opinion, it already belongs to seniors, and we are not asking the government to spend any new money. The bill is merely asking it to return to senior citizens who have been deprived of the guaranteed income supplement the money to which they are entitled.

The public did not call for royal recommendation to deprive them of their due. The period of retroactivity has been reduced to 11 months since 1995; before that it was 5 years. They were not asked to consent to being deprived of their rights and the money coming to them.

I find it immoral that we cannot now call upon the government to show some conscience and provide the least advantaged of seniors with what they are entitled to, after it has used every means possible to deprive them of it.

I sat on the committee that examined the GIS question in 2001. We came to realize that 270,000 seniors among Canada's least advantaged—since those who are entitled to the supplement certainly do not have money in tax havens—have been deprived of the GIS, including 68,000 Quebecers. The government is sitting on \$3.2 billion that does not belong to it; this money belongs to seniors.

While I do not challenge the Speaker's ruling, I will never accept being told that a bill like this one cannot be voted on, on the pretext that it would deprive the government of money. That is wrong. The money in question is not the government's money but money owing to the most disadvantaged of seniors.

Private Members' Business

If you do the math, you will see that in Quebec alone since 1995 those who already have the least have been deprived of some \$1 billion. Some people aged 72, 75 or 80 are having to live on \$6,000 a year because they do not get the GIS, not having been properly informed about their entitlement to it. Disadvantaged seniors often live in conditions that keep them from getting the necessary information. They are not the ones responsible; the government is responsible for depriving these seniors of what they are entitled to by making the situation so complicated.

I find it totally immoral that an issue like this one can only be discussed, and not voted on. As I said at the beginning of my speech, no royal recommendation was required to deprive seniors of what they were owed.

I have toured Quebec with my colleagues from the Bloc. We have held 43 meetings across the province with seniors who were deprived of the guaranteed income supplement. The meeting in Sherbrooke comes to mind, as I was particularly struck. It was held in a church basement on a Monday afternoon, and so many people showed up that extra chairs had to be added. Three hundred and fifty people attended that meeting.

• (1110)

We learned that, among those present, perhaps 10 or 20 were deprived of the guaranteed income supplement. I met the daughter of an 88 year old woman who has since passed. This woman did not contribute much to society: only 10 or so children. That is already something. As Yvon Deschamps would say, she never really found time to work; she had too much to do at home. In her later years, she had to live on \$6,000 a year and, after she passed, the government was left with \$90,000 that belonged to her.

If a royal recommendation is required to go after that money, let us get it immediately. It makes no sense that more justice cannot be restored. It makes no sense that, while there is so much talk about all kinds of violence, we can be so violent here. No doubt about it, it was violence against this woman.

I can provide names of people this has happened to in Quebec. In my riding, there is a couple in their 70s, who thanked me because as a result of my efforts they now get \$4,000 more a year. They each got \$2,000 more. I asked them when this started. They told me they got only 11 months of retroactive payments. However, \$4,000 a year for five years equals \$20,000. The government therefore took \$16,000 belonging to that couple. This is happening everywhere.

I went to Vancouver where I met with some of these people. The government brags about being good administrators. It is scandalous. They say they are good administrators, but they take money from those who are less fortunate. They can pay down the debt that way, but it is nothing to be proud of.

They say they are good administrators, but they take money from the unemployed. Again, that is nothing to be proud of. The members opposite who are bragging about achieving zero deficit on the backs of seniors, the unemployed, the sick and the provinces, certainly have no reason to claim to be good administrators. I would never admit such a thing.

My bill asks only one thing and that is to re-establish the most basic justices. Seniors are absolutely not responsible for being

inadequately informed about what they are entitled to receive. Why not treat them the way we would want to be treated.

If we stop paying our taxes for five or six years, does that mean we owe the government only 11 months of back taxes? I doubt it. When we owe money to the government, it has the right to go into our wallets and take what it wants. It will even impose penalties and interest.

My bill simply asks the government to be honest. It has \$3 billion that does not belong to it. There is a lack of honesty. I am sorry, but there is a lack—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Order, please. I would remind the hon. member to address his comments through the Chair.

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am told to obey the rules, but we should obey them too and give people what is owing to them but was stolen from them. That is how one obeys the rules. I will never accept being unable to say that this money is in the government coffers, \$3.2 billion, of which \$800 million is for Quebec. And this amount is constantly increasing. During my travels around Quebec, I learned that about 30,000 people had not received what was owing to them. There are still about 40,000 who are not receiving their due. As I meet them, I tell them that they are entitled to more. People call me every day in my office to check their files. And we see that they have not received what is owing to them.

Eleven months retroactivity here is unacceptable. It is unfair and dishonest. Regardless of the rules that I am supposed to obey, when something is dishonest, it is dishonest. It has to be possible in this House to speak the truth. In my view, the senior who died at 88 years of age had \$90,000 stolen from her. Do not tell me that she was not robbed, because she was. Why did she not get what was owing to her? It was simply because things had been made complicated. The information was not getting through. She had to call in order to receive what was owing to her. But at the other end of the line was an answering machine. Sometimes people had to wait two hours on the telephone to get an answer. When people got the form to make their application, it was so complicated that I myself, who have spent my life filling out forms, was exhausted just looking at it. It was unbelievable. An expert was needed to fill it out. So just imagine what that means for older people who are often ill.

I knew someone who had had a stroke. He lived alone and could not figure all this out. So he just threw the form in the garbage. He said to himself: "If they do not want to give me the money, let them have it. I am fed up having to fight to get what is owing to me. At this time in my life, I should be able to get it."

Private Members' Business

We should have a government that is honest enough to ensure that these people receive their due. I know that this bill requires royal assent. However, it pains me to learn that we will not be able to vote on so honest and logical a bill and say that the 11 months retroactivity makes no sense. If a senior realizes that he has been owed money for five years, why grant him only 11 months retroactivity? Yet if a citizen has owed money to the government for five years, the government is going to go after its five years of retroactivity.

I find it painful to think of these citizens. They are of inestimable value. Seniors have made sacrifices. They have built this society of ours. They have had to toil and struggle to earn their living. They have raised large families and worked up to 20 hours a day. That has been the lot of mothers. In fact, most of those who have been deprived of the guaranteed income supplement are our mothers. It is curious that the poorest of the seniors in our society are women, mothers. For example, there is one mother in Sherbrooke who raised her family. After providing society with eight or ten children, her reward was to be allowed to be poor in her old age, even though some of her money was in the government's coffers.

When we see waste such as the sponsorship scandal, we can talk about it. Money flows like water here. We only need look at what is happening. Consider the past president of Canada Post, for example, and you will see that when some people retire, they don't retire poor. That is the case in other fields as well. Money flows here as if it were nothing. But when it comes to giving it to the most vulnerable in our society, that is apparently too much to ask.

• (1115)

That requires money from the government. As a result, it will be difficult to get royal recommendation. Allow me at least to say that much. This is not to come down against your decision, but I find this painful.

I hope that one day we will be honest enough to reimburse the money we owe to the most vulnerable people in our society. These people have earned this money; they have not stolen it. So we will continue to fight until they obtain their due.

• (1120)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Before going to question and comment period, I would like to say a few words. The hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain mentioned that he has been asked to obey the rules. I assume that he was not referring to my reminder to him to address the Chair and that he is not challenging the authority and decision of the Chair.

The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Social Development has the floor.

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you, first, for having reminded the member of the rules because no one on this side of the House is dishonest—neither in our department nor in the government. I do not think that the truth lies only on the other side of the House and not with all the members. We are here to respect this.

In addition, I would like to thank the Speaker for having agreed with the committee that raised this matter as well as with the

government that raised the matter of the royal recommendation regarding bills. There are often bills in the House that do not comply with the rules.

I have a question and a comment. All the members who have dealt with this problem have gone and met with seniors in their ridings. I still meet with these seniors, just as I suppose all the members of the House do. I am the one who has raised this matter, and so far, I must say that it has not caused any problems.

I have checked with my Liberal colleagues. Thanks to all the efforts that this government and this department have made, we have now managed to contact 98% of the people. Maybe there are some people whom we have not managed to contact, but there are reasons for this. For example, the homeless. It is obviously impossible for us to contact them in the same way as we contacted seniors. But we have made great efforts—and I will have an opportunity to speak about this again during my address—working together with non-governmental organizations—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos: We show respect on both sides of the House.

Of course efforts have been made.

I would like to address my comments to the hon. member who introduced this bill. Much has been done, and I will speak about this in my address. If the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain knows any seniors who do not get the guaranteed income supplement, he can inform the minister. The minister has already said in this House that if someone knew of such people, he or she should let him know. We would then ensure of course that they receive what is due to them. I agree that it belongs to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Before giving the floor to the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, I would like to issue a caution. I would like to point out that since 1958—so this is nothing new, no invention of mine—certain expressions or certain words have been considered unparliamentary. Among such words, I note “dishonest”, “dishonest intent”, “theft” and “steal”.

I would therefore ask the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, who now has the floor, to be prudent in his use of certain words.

Mr. Marcel Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure you of my respect for the Chair. I have myself held such a position on committees in the Government of Quebec. I also liked to be respected. Therefore I have great respect for the decisions you make. However it is not the decision I am criticizing, but the fact.

Private Members' Business

Here in the House, certain words are banned, for example, saying that someone is lying. As we know, the French language revises its vocabulary from time to time. It might be a good idea to adjust it. Adjust it, for example, to reflect the fact that if there is one word that should not be banned, it is "lie". However that may be, we do not have the right to call someone a liar. However, is the truth being spoken here, on certain occasions? Sometimes one might doubt it.

To respond to the question of the hon. member opposite, indeed, there are still people who are forgotten. Of course, there has been an improvement. In that regard I must pay tribute to Ms. Jane Stewart. My colleagues and I have gone on tours. I hope that others have done so as well, although I know that when I went to Vancouver, I was the first to speak about this. In short, in the wake of the work that we have done, Ms. Stewart has improved things immensely. For example, now a person answers the telephone. Furthermore, the application form has been simplified and its length reduced. On the other hand, in a letter, she told me that there is just one thing she could not change: retroactivity. But that is what has to be done. That money has to be returned to the people it belongs to.

I do not want to call anyone a thief. I know that is not permitted. But I have certain suspicions. When money that belongs to me turns up in my neighbour's pocket and he keeps it, I suspect his intentions.

• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it probably is 10%, and I realize the number is coming down, but it could be upward to 25% of those eligible for GIS and some of the other supplements?

How does the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain square the fact that the government may not allow us to vote on this considering that we need royal assent and considering that Bill C-66 leads us to believe the government is concerned about this group?

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is indeed correct. On the one hand, they say they are concerned about it. We have had an announcement of the upcoming speech. They are concerned about it, but it is rather curious. They will say these people will be given \$2.7 billion by 2010. But these people have been deprived of \$3.2 billion over the last 10 years. In the meantime, 15 years will have gone by. The people who have been denied this money will not receive it, because they will be gone. I am afraid they are banking on the disappearance of the clientele. One day, these people will be granted their rightful retroactivity, but perhaps someone is waiting for the clientele to decrease in numbers. I find that appalling.

I cannot but applaud the increase to the guaranteed income supplement and pensions. Of course I do. Over the last 10 years, these people's purchasing power has fallen by 10%. So we should start by giving their due to the people who have been denied their due.

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this bill by the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain would enable seniors eligible for the Guaranteed Income

Supplement to receive it without applying for it, and would also abolish the current restrictions on retroactivity.

[English]

Before addressing the specifics of the bill's proposal, I would like to highlight how Social Development Canada is responding to the needs of seniors at all income levels and the tools and programs that the department offers them.

Seniors make up the fast growing population in Canadian society. We know that in the next 30 years, one in four Canadians will be a senior. Today's seniors are healthier, better educated, better off financially than seniors of previous generations and they are also enjoying longer lives.

Our government recognizes and has always recognized that we must prepare for the diverse and rapidly growing seniors population of the future. At the same time we are committed to addressing the needs of the four million seniors in Canada today and to ensure we respect and benefit from their wealth of knowledge and experience.

[Translation]

We have a very practical model for attaining those objectives, one which defines the issues and immediately comes up with possible solutions. That model is the detailed report, "Creating A National Seniors Agenda", tabled in 2004 by the Prime Minister's Task Force on Active Living and Dignity for Seniors, under the auspices of the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina, Minister of State (Families and Caregivers).

Even before the Bloc Québécois's tour, a former colleague, Yolande Thibeault, struck a committee which undertook a cross-country tour precisely in order to determine the needs of seniors. This issue was raised and noted, and steps were taken as a result. As the hon. member has said, Ms. Thibeault's report enabled the former minister to introduce all the measures possible. Today, thanks to the report by the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina, improvements to the program continue to be made.

The report by the second group informed us that Canadians wanted policies, programs and services for seniors that met their needs more effectively.

So far our consultations and meetings with other governments and stakeholders have allowed us to define common challenges and possibilities for seniors, including financial security, health and well-being, social involvement and participation, housing and public safety.

Currently, the Government of Canada spends roughly \$67 billion a year on programs for seniors. According to the estimates, seniors receive a substantial part of the allocated funds, or some \$54.5 billion for 2005-06, as direct income support under the government pension programs administered by Social Development Canada. The other \$17 billion is used for tax credits, health care, housing and support for veterans.

Private Members' Business

• (1130)
[English]

Our retirement income system is definitely a success. The current \$52 billion in pension payments is only part of a broader system that includes tax assisted personal savings and private pensions. Canada's public pensions are on solid ground, thanks to the government, and are projected to remain that way in the future. That is why today we are in that position, because of the actions the government took 10 years ago.

We are proud of the fact that in less than 20 years the system has dramatically reduced the number of seniors who live in poverty. Whereas in 1980 over 20% of the senior population lived on low incomes, today that proportion is less than 7%. It is nothing to be proud of, by the way. We are working to make it 0%. That is our goal and our commitment to seniors.

We also know that older women are especially vulnerable to poverty. Many are not aware of what benefits they are entitled to. It could be a question of language or it could be a question, as I said, of homelessness. There are a number of factors. That is why we are spreading the word through Quebec's women's centres. This is an example of where we have not gone only to the government. We have actually gone on the ground.

With 55 locations in and around Montreal, the women's centres have a strong presence in the region and proven experience working with disadvantaged and abused women. With this promising partnership, Outreach teams in the regions have had the chance to meet about 400 women. We are now gaining a foothold in women's centres throughout the province.

[Translation]

Our goal is to help more women in Quebec help themselves. As an elected member from Quebec, I am pleased to see such success, including the success of all my colleagues on this side of the House who are taking this type of approach to provide information to people who are not familiar with the various government programs.

The government is also looking for ways to promote active living and social participation for seniors, which are essential to their well-being and that of our society.

That is why we included the New Horizons program in our 2005 budget; to encourage older Canadians to use their skills, knowledge and experience as volunteers, mentors and community leaders.

The measures we are taking to improve life for seniors today and to prepare for the next demographic shift shows our determination to help the most vulnerable in our society, especially low-income seniors.

[English]

Despite these wide-ranging programs, we know there are still Canadian seniors on low incomes who are vulnerable, particularly single seniors in urban areas and single senior women.

Our government recognizes the need for action to improve the situation for Canada's poorest seniors. By 2007, the guaranteed income supplement will be increased by \$36 a month for single seniors and \$58 for couples. This increase will benefit over 1.6

million seniors. We will do better because we do have that surplus. That is exactly what we said and exactly what we have done.

We also recognize the need to provide a federal focal point for the collaborative efforts behind the movement to address seniors' issues. In the February budget, we responded by creating the Seniors' Secretariat within Social Development Canada. The new secretariat's mandate will be to collaborate with all levels of government, stakeholders, experts and the public to provide a focal point for senior's issues.

I can proudly say that our public pension system is working.

• (1135)

[Translation]

Therefore, I cannot support Bill C-301, even if it will not be put to a vote. I completely agree with the government's position that this bill, if passed, would unreasonably burden the governmental retirement system administratively, technically and financially. There is nothing dishonest about that. No one stole any money. Without the application process and income verification, the system would be open to abuse.

In addition, we would not have enough information to determine entitlement for seniors who, for instance, do not file tax returns. This would also substantially increase the risk of errors within the system.

According to the Public Affairs Branch at Social Development Canada, individuals who do not file income tax returns include seniors from vulnerable communities, such as the homeless, aboriginal people, seniors living in remote areas and seniors who speak neither English nor French.

[English]

As parliamentary secretary, I can assure the House and all colleagues that Social Development Canada has outreach activities in all regions of the country to increase seniors' awareness of, confidence in and take up of Canada's retirement income system.

We are reaching out indirectly to vulnerable communities through our aboriginal governments, cultural communities and homelessness advocates to notify non-tax filers and other potential recipients who are missing out on their GIS entitlement.

Private Members' Business

Activities in the regions include such things as information booths, mailings, newspaper articles and presentations. As I said earlier, I and other MPs have gone out and done their own outreach. To date, 350,000 letters and personalized application forms have gone to seniors across the country identified for CRA income tax information. This campaign complements the initiative taken in 1999 to automatically renew approximately 1.3 million GIS recipients whose tax returns confirm continued entitlement automatically.

[*Translation*]

Through our efforts, we now have approximately 200,000 new recipients of the guaranteed income supplement and spousal allowance. In Quebec, more than 75,000 letters and personalized application forms were sent to seniors, informing them that the guaranteed income supplement was available. As a result, the number of recipients has grown by another 50,000.

We have made and will continue to make every effort. Our government, on this side of the House, wants to reach everyone who is entitled to the guaranteed income supplement.

All the efforts by Social Development Canada will continue. Our entire support program will also continue. If the hon. members across the way know of any seniors, this government is committed to reaching out to them and ensuring that they at least have access to what they are entitled to.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-301, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act in regard to the monthly guaranteed income supplement. This bill would amend the Old Age Security Act to allow eligible pensioners to receive a monthly guaranteed income supplement without having to make application. It also would repeal the restrictions respecting retroactivity.

I applaud the intent of Bill C-301. Although there are a few technical details that need to be reviewed, I am quite prepared to support this legislation in principle and I look forward to seeing it discussed in committee.

Amending the Old Age Security Act to ensure that eligible pensioners receive their monthly guaranteed income supplement is, quite simply, an issue of fairness. All too often we see the Liberal government doing whatever it can to squeeze every last dime out of Canadian taxpayers regardless of their ability to pay.

The freeze on income trusts and the resulting uncertainty for investors, especially seniors, is a perfect example. This government's problem with existing income trusts is that investors get to keep more of their own money, a unique concept that is foreign to this government. Many of these investors are seniors who rely on income trusts for financial security in their retirement years.

A recent letter to the Minister of Finance from CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, stated that Canadian "seniors are actually enraged, frightened and panicked" in relation to this government's indecisiveness on income trusts. They are not supportive, as the minister would suggest, showing once again that this government really does not understand and is out of touch with the Canadian public.

One senior writes to the government that:

Retirees are beyond the saving stage in their lives and spend almost all of their income. This benefits the Canadian economy. Your actions are happening at a time when retirees are facing some very major increases such as energy costs. This is a time for government to be compassionate and fair with retirees who have helped to make Canada the great country that it is.

Another senior writes:

Many seniors have been hurt by the uncertainty caused by the government's insensitive handling of the income trust situation.

Yet another senior is on record as saying:

The government has taken the solid platform from under our feet and replaced it with an open shaft.

Canadian seniors are continually facing the effects of a shrinking dollar: increasing energy costs that directly affect the ability of seniors to heat their homes and put gasoline in their cars; property taxes that continue to escalate, making it difficult for them to stay in their own homes; and indeed, the rising costs related to the basic necessities of life such as food. All of these continue to make it difficult for seniors to survive.

Not only is this government not providing seniors with the financial assistance they really need, the government is actually penalizing many seniors through a system that all too often utilizes clawbacks.

If the government deems it appropriate to cast a cloud of apprehension onto seniors when it reviews income trusts and to make it almost impossible for most seniors who really need financial assistance to obtain it, then it would be quite hypocritical for Liberal MPs to shut down further study in ensuring that GIS payments reaches their intended recipients.

Even if there are existing questions about implementation of costs, Canadian seniors deserve to see this bill pass second reading and go forward for further study. Indeed, if the government truly believes that Bill C-66 can be effective in helping those most in need of assistance with high energy costs, I do not see how the Liberals can vote against ensuring that seniors receive their due.

We all know that Bill C-66 sets out a specific eligibility criterion for seniors to receive the proposed energy rebate payment. Single seniors must be receiving the GIS in order to get their \$125 in assistance. Of course, the Liberal government's generous offer of assistance with high energy costs becomes nothing more than a hollow promise when in fact hundreds of thousands of seniors miss out because they fail to fill out a form.

Again, while this government never misses an opportunity to collect money from Canadians, it just is not as enthusiastic about ensuring that Canadians get to keep what is rightfully theirs. This bill is an opportunity to make some amends.

Private Members' Business

● (1140)

However, I find it ironic that the particular assistance for those pensioners in need, those whom we are talking about today, is called a “guaranteed income supplement”. The National Advisory Council on Aging recently released a report entitled “Seniors on the Margins, Aging in Poverty in Canada”. In this report, the council states that there are more than 50,000 seniors who are eligible for the old age security pension but have not applied and more than 300,000 seniors who are eligible for the supplement but are not receiving it.

In 2001 a Toronto food bank raised the alarm when people aged 60 and over accounted for 10% of its users and only a minority of these individuals knew about and were receiving GIS and allowance benefits. They were living under very difficult circumstances. Once the rent was paid, the median amount remaining per week for all other expenses was a mere \$34.65, yet the estimated average cost of food for one week in Toronto is over \$40.

Forty per cent of those individuals were having difficulty paying for their medication every month and 27% were not taking their medication for lack of money.

That same year, the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities issued a report to this House which concluded that there were more than 380,000 Canadian seniors who were eligible for this supplement but were not receiving it.

Incidentally, the title of the report was “The Guaranteed Income Supplement: The Duty to Reach All”. That was four years ago. I think I am being more than reasonable in suggesting that it is time for the government to start taking some action. Otherwise, the guaranteed income supplement is not really much of a guarantee, is it?

Eligible seniors must apply every single year to receive the supplement and we know there are many reasons why this application is not filled out. These reasons include not understanding the eligibility requirements or tax returns and educational pamphlets due to language barriers, functional illiteracy and failing eyesight or, quite simply, because of a lack of awareness that the GIS must be applied for on an annual basis.

The one common factor is that these seniors have very little money during their retirement years and are among the most vulnerable members of our society. Instead of enjoying their retirement in dignity and comfort, too many Canadian seniors are struggling for the basic necessities of life.

We have a duty to help—not neglect—the seniors who helped build this country. By ignoring the eligible seniors who are losing out on the financial assistance they have been guaranteed, we are also stripping away other rights and privileges they deserve. Many provinces have programs such as prescription drug plans, other income supplements, heating oil subsidies and home care assistance programs that are available only for those individuals receiving GIS. When an eligible Canadian senior does not receive his or her guaranteed income supplement, for whatever reason, he or she also loses out on other services that are essential to their quality of life.

Allowing eligible pensioners to receive their monthly GIS without having to make a yearly application is a measure that I support, not only out of compassion but also because it is simply the right thing to do for those in need. Bill C-301 would enable automatic processing of the guaranteed income supplement based on information from the Ministry of National Revenue, and let us face it, if we owe any money to the tax department, we know that they make sure they let us know in a big hurry.

I believe further attention must be paid to details to ensure that the GIS does in fact reach everyone to whom it is applicable. The retroactivity aspect of this bill also requires more research and definition. Who qualifies for retroactive payments? How far back should it apply? How will it be implemented? What, if any, restrictions will be in place? These are all important questions that deserve detailed scrutiny. I would very much like to see this bill go to committee so that it can be carefully examined and given the details it needs.

Giving the ministry authority to automatically provide GIS to those who deserve it does not necessarily provide the ministry with the capability to do the same. I am certain that this legislation can be reinforced and strengthened for the benefit of our seniors.

The need is unquestionable. As the Conservative critic for seniors' issues, I have consulted with seniors across Canada and I can say that unarguably there is a broad consensus from coast to coast to coast that seniors need to automatically receive any and all benefits as they become eligible.

Here are a few of the facts. OAS and CPP are the main sources of income for over two-thirds of seniors, and on average, 29% of the total income for seniors is derived from private employers' pensions and RRSPs, 27% from OAS, including GIS, and 20% from CPP and QPP. CPP benefits replace approximately 25% of income earned, for which a worker contributed to CPP and QPP, and 35% of seniors receive GIS.

● (1145)

As we can readily see, many seniors count on every dollar just to survive. Let us not deny seniors their rights. If the Liberals are truly concerned, as they have led us to believe, then let them as the government give us a royal recommendation and give us an opportunity to vote on Bill C-301. Let us put this to the House for a free vote. If the government truly cares about seniors, it will give seniors not lip service but action.

I ask that we as their elected representatives do what is right and necessary to ensure that those individuals who helped build our nation receive what is rightfully theirs.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier the Speaker ruled with regard to the need for a royal recommendation. The member has just referred to the aspect of a vote. For clarification, it is my understanding that there still will be a vote at second reading to determine whether the bill goes to committee, but that the bill is not eligible to go to third reading because of the royal recommendation requirement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The member's understanding of the situation is correct.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain for this bill of such importance to all seniors throughout Canada. It is a very constructive idea for the government. Even if it is not possible to pass this bill at third reading, all the government has to do is act. Why would the Liberal government not change its mind and take action to solve seniors' problems? Why is the government ignoring the many seniors who are suffering because of the cost of living?

• (1150)

[English]

Let us not sit and accept that no action is possible because our parliamentary procedures require that the bill cannot go to third reading as it requires the expenditure of money and, therefore, the whole thing comes grinding to a halt.

Let us acknowledge that we are dealing with an issue that has been raised in the House for at least five years. Let me point out to the members, who already are catcalling from their places, if the Liberals acted in response to those concerns, why did Statistics Canada come out with a report on Friday which showed that 200,000 seniors who were eligible for GIS did not receive this fundamental income security? If the Liberals have done everything they could, why are so many people in need of income to pay their bills, so they do not have to give up on necessary medications to put food on the table or turn down their heat to ensure that they can pay the rent?

We are not talking about a handful of senior citizens who can fend for themselves. We are talking about 200,000 senior citizens who have every right to this money. However, because of Liberal stubbornness, they are not getting the money they need to subsist. That is an absolute shame and an embarrassment for our country. The government should stand in its place today and say that it recognizes there still is a problem, that it recognizes the Statistics Canada report and that it agrees it has not done enough.

We are dealing with two problems today.

We are talking about a fundamental program for income security of our seniors, the guaranteed income supplement, that is not reaching every Canadian. That issue has been raised day in and day out over the last number of years, but to hardly a successful result or conclusion.

If the Liberals have done so much, why, when we raised this back in 2004, were we told there were 270,000 seniors not eligible for the guaranteed income supplement. Today, a whole year and more later, still 200,000 senior citizens are not receiving the guaranteed income supplement? If they have done so much in the last year, why have they only reduced the rolls by 70,000? How many of those 70,000 are new entries into the senior years and now are suddenly eligible for the first time?

The real question is why can the government not figure out how to get money to those who need it the most, especially when they are eligible for that money?

We are in the House a lot of the time arguing for more money and help for low income people, especially seniors. We would like to see

an increase in the GIS. We would like to see the government pay attention to the difficulties seniors face. We have a program for which senior citizens in Canada are eligible, but many have not received the benefit.

Now the government tries to suggest that those not receiving the benefit must only be homeless. We have 200,000 senior citizens who are homeless and who are not receiving the benefit? Perhaps the Liberals should read the Statistics Canada report that suggests these people may not be literate, or they may not have the language capacity, or they may not have access to information, or they may not be in touch with other people, or they may be isolated or living in solitude, or they may not have the information they need to access this money.

Perhaps the government should go out of its way to find the real reasons for this neglect and address them, especially in the context of the government's decision to find a formula for a gas rebate that is so narrow and problematic that it will deny many senior citizens the gas rebate because it refuses to address the problem at hand.

Let us look at it this way. The government has decided a gas rebate will go to senior citizens if they now receive the GIS. That is interesting. It puts this formula in place knowing full well that many senior citizens do not receive the GIS and it proceeds anyway without a plan to ensure that every senior citizen who is eligible for the guaranteed income supplement receives the gas rebate.

• (1155)

How does the government explain that to those 200,000 seniors who need to pay their bills too? They have to turn the heat on to keep warm. They might still drive a car and need gas for that car. They need the benefit of the rebate. They are no less needy than those who are already receiving GIS simply because they were in the loop, they were tracked down and they managed to find a way to apply.

Let us look at those senior citizens who are eligible for GIS but who do not apply. Let us fix the system now before another cold winter. Let us ensure that every senior citizen who is eligible for guaranteed income supplement receives the gas rebate. They are eligible because they are low income. They are trying to make ends meet, and they need our help. They need to be recognized for their contributions over the years. Let us do something before the cold winter sets in.

My hon. colleague, the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, also suggested that we look at the issue of retroactivity. What is wrong with that? What is wrong with the government saying that it made a mistake and that it owes senior citizens something because it did not exactly pursue those seniors who were eligible for the guaranteed income supplement? Hundreds of thousands of seniors have struggled over the years to make ends meet. They would not have had to struggle quite so hard if they had received the guaranteed income supplement.

The government is sitting on a possible \$12 billion surplus this year alone. I have just come from the finance committee where we have received four reports from our four independent forecasters. Three of the four indicate for this fiscal year the surpluses are in the range of \$10 billion to \$12.4 billion.

How do we explain to seniors that the government is sitting on \$12 billion in surplus but it is not prepared to apply the GIS to those who were denied it. The government did not have the foresight, or the courage or the commitment to track them down and ensure they received something that was their due?

How do we explain the cutting of corners and suffering those seniors have had to go through over the last number of years because the government could not get off its duff and do something that was proactive and meaningful to address the full scope of the problems facing our seniors citizens? That is all of which to suggest that the government simply reacts to its shortcomings, downfall and its failure to address these over the last number of years. It has not suggested anything proactive to deal with the need to increase the limits beyond that to try to prevent clawbacks of GIS of to ensure that every senior citizen is able to live with the knowledge of a secure retirement benefit.

Let us put it into context. We know from many surveys and information that senior citizens are very worried about their pensions. When they retire, will they be there when they need them? Will the present pensions they receive be adequate to deal with the cost of living. Seventy-three per cent of Canadians say that they are worried about not having enough money to live on after retirement. That is up by almost 20% from two years ago. That is a lot of anxious people, anxious because of Liberal inaction and failed promises. They are anxious because of a government that is so committed to corporate tax cuts and benefits to corporations that it cannot see the people it has been elected to serve. It cannot recognize need when it is put directly in front of its face.

The government should deal with something that is so obvious. Make it possible for those who are eligible for the guaranteed income supplement to get it. Let us look at giving a payment to all those who should have received it over the last number of years. Let us respect our senior citizens. Let us respect their dignity and what they themselves want to see, having contributed so much to our great country.

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

Hon. Ken Dryden (for the Minister of Industry) moved that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I think you would find unanimous consent to order that Bill C-37, an

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act to amend the Telecommunications Act, be deemed to have been amended as follows. I move:

That Bill C-37, in Clause 1, be amended by replacing lines 23 to 26 on page 3 with the following:

“paragraph (c) for an electoral district;

(f) made for the sole purpose of collecting information for a survey of members of the public; or

(g) made for the sole purpose of soliciting a subscription for a newspaper of general circulation”.

This motion, as you will note, is identical to Motion No. 7, which was not selected for consideration at report stage.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the consent of the House to put the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): 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)

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties concerning the debate scheduled for later this day as well as tomorrow, in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1 and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That during debates in committee of the whole on Monday, October 24 and Tuesday, October 25 on Government Business Nos. 18 and 19 respectively, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be entertained by the Speaker.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is there unanimous consent to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

• (1205)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act, as amended, be read the third time and passed.

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Hon. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to begin the third reading debate of Bill C-37, an act to amend the Telecommunications Act.

This bill would augment the powers of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, to establish a more effective regime and protect consumers against unsolicited telemarketing in Canada.

The bill provides the legislative framework for the creation of a national do not call list. I am sure that every member of the House and probably everyone watching the proceedings today can recall being interrupted by telemarketers during dinner or when spending some quality time with their family and friends. There are times when we are willing to listen to people who want to sell us something. There are also times when we do not want to listen. There are times when pitches made in our homes by certain corporations are just not acceptable. This bill responds to those concerns that Canadians have strongly voiced. They are fed up with unwanted unsolicited telemarketing calls and want an effective solution.

In 2003 Environics conducted a survey of consumers' attitudes toward telemarketing. Eighty-one per cent of the respondents reported receiving unsolicited calls. On average, respondents received over three unsolicited calls each week.

Public opinion polls tell us that unsolicited telecommunications have indeed become an inconvenience and a nuisance to many Canadians. In fact, during the survey conducted in 2003, 97% of the respondents reported a negative reaction to unsolicited calls. Of those, 38% said they would tolerate the calls, 35% said they were highly annoyed and 24% hated receiving those telephone calls. It is clear that Canadians think that unsolicited calls are a problem.

Unsolicited telemarketing has become a serious irritant for many Canadians as existing rules provide little protection for consumers against intrusive unwanted calls. Under the 1994 rules, telemarketers are required to maintain individual do not call lists. These rules have been in place for the past 10 years. Since they were implemented by the CRTC they have been found to be ineffective for the following reasons.

First, the rules have resulted in some confusion among consumers. For one thing, few consumers know that they have the right to register a specific company on a do not call list, but even for those consumers who wish to take advantage of these lists, the task is daunting. Consumers who do not want to receive calls need to put their registration in place on the do not call list of hundreds of different companies. These registrations are placed for three years, after which the consumer must register again.

The current regime is ineffective because it is difficult to enforce. When consumers receive further calls from firms for which they registered on the individual do not call list, it is hard for them to prove that they were registered with that specific company.

Some 14% of the people Environics polled reported that they had tried to make a complaint regarding an unsolicited call. Among this subgroup, a majority of 59% said their complaint was never resolved.

We have heard from Canadians. The reality is that the inability to control telemarketing continues to be a pervasive source of frustration. The time has come for a more effective approach to regulating unsolicited telemarketing, an approach that will benefit both consumers and the telemarketing industry and one that will be easier to enforce.

● (1210)

At the heart of the issue is the need to have an effective tool for enforcement and compliance, and that is the focus of the bill before us. If we create an effective enforcement and compliance regime through rules that are fair and transparent, we have the foundation for smart regulation of telemarketing. For that reason the CRTC requires legislated authority to impose administrative monetary penalties, that is to fine businesses that continue to make unsolicited calls to persons who have registered on a do not call list.

With the ability to fine a marketing company, CRTC will be able to apply penalties that will provide a deterrent and stop companies from making many of those unwanted calls. The use of a national do not call list will improve the effectiveness of the system. For these reasons, we are seeking through the bill to amend the Telecommunications Act to provide administrative monetary penalties for violations of the national do not call list.

The costs of maintaining such a list would include database maintenance, complaint processing and the investigative and enforcement costs. The CRTC has recommended that a third party administrator who specializes in databases should be selected to maintain the national do not call list. With this bill we amend the Telecommunications Act to allow for a third party administrator and cost recovery.

Legislative amendments have been recommended and would exempt calls from the national do not call list for registered charities as defined under section 248 of the Income Tax Act, for companies with existing business relationships, and for calls from political parties. Exempt organizations would be required to maintain individual do not call lists. In addition, survey and polling firms would also be exempt from the do not call list and would continue to be exempt to collect the views of Canadians.

There are certain implementation details that arise from the establishment of a do not call list. For example, how would telemarketers access the do not call data and how often? It is not our intention to delve into these details, but rather to ask the CRTC to undertake consultations with concerned Canadians to determine the do not call system that best suits the needs of all Canadians.

We want to ensure that Canadian consumers have their privacy needs met and give them the ability to choose to be protected from inconvenience and nuisance. The current rules have been ineffective in giving consumers this choice. With this bill we create a system where consumers can take effective steps to stop unwanted telemarketing calls. In this way we will address an issue that Canadians consider to be a major irritant in their daily lives.

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The Privacy Commissioner of Canada, Ms. Jennifer Stoddart, congratulated the industry minister on proposed legislation to create a national do not call list for telemarketers. She said:

I think this is a great step forward for privacy. Our Office has been concerned about this issue for some time and we have certainly heard from many members of the public who are frustrated by intrusive phone calls. We welcome this initiative.

Recently, in front of the Standing Committee on Industry, Natural Resources, Science and Technology the federal Privacy Commissioner delivered a statement backed by nine of the provincial and territorial information and privacy commissioners that once again supported the creation of a national do not call list that would enhance privacy by making it easier for individual Canadians to control intrusive telephone calls.

Consumer groups, including the Public Interest Advocacy Centre, are in favour of the creation of a national do not call list. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre has indicated that the creation of a do not call registry would be the most effective, elegant and enforceable solution to the present telemarketing situation. It also indicated that a single list is simple to administer and it is easy to determine when a telemarketer is in non-compliance.

The Canadian Marketing Association, the largest marketing association in the country that represents hundreds of telemarketing companies, supports the bill. Since 2001 the Canadian Marketing Association has recommended that the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, CRTC, establish a national do not call list to cover all telemarketers in Canada.

• (1215)

Mr. John Gustavson, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Marketing Association, stated:

We are pleased to see the federal government has responded to our request to establish a national do-not-call service to address the increasing number of consumer complaints regarding some telemarketing practices in Canada... We believe a compulsory do-not-call service for all companies that use the telephone to market their goods and services to potential customers is the most effective means to curtail consumer annoyance with telemarketers.

Telemarketing has become more and more pervasive. There is no sign that it is going away. The inability to control telemarketers' access to telephones in our homes and businesses has become a source of frustration for a large percentage of Canadians.

The bill creates the right regulatory environment for sensible, smart telecommunicating. It will safeguard the privacy of Canadians and their right to choose with whom they wish to communicate. For thousands of Canadians who may opt to register on the national do not call list, it will mean quiet evenings with their families free of commercial interruption.

Canadian consumers are overwhelmingly in favour of this method of controlling unwanted telephone solicitation. The majority of respondents, nearly four out of five, supported the creation of a national do not call list. Some two-thirds indicated they would likely sign up for a do not call service.

The government is taking steps to give individual Canadians an effective, easy way to curtail intrusive telemarketing and to protect their privacy. I urge hon. members to support the bill.

I also feel it is my responsibility to comment on the work the committee did in making sure that all of the concerns of Canadians across the country were brought to committee. They were raised and dealt with in a very reasonable way. I am very pleased that all parties seem to be very much on side with this bill. I hope for its speedy passage in the House.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns that has been raised over and over during the debate is the change charitable organizations will have to make to adjust some of the income that they generate from telemarketing calls. It is important to note that the income they generate based on telemarketing calls often goes toward providing services and community needs.

For example, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD, derives significant revenues from telephone solicitation. MADD will be impacted by the bill and will have to go before the CRTC for an exemption and/or will have to change some of its habits related to telemarketing to ensure that the same revenue comes in.

I ask the parliamentary secretary what other things is the government doing for the not for profit organizations that could potentially be affected by the bill? What will happen if charitable organizations like Greenpeace, police associations, and groups and organizations like the Lions Club find barriers for the use of this type of activity?

What commitment will the government make to those organizations, should they have some disruption with regard to their income and the services they provide to communities? It is important to note that some people will lose jobs and the communities will lose services that are very much needed to address problems that have been identified in the communities.

I ask the parliamentary secretary what specific measures will the government take to ensure the vibrancy of those organizations that are affected by reduced revenue from the banning of telephone solicitation?

• (1220)

Hon. Jerry Pickard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that my colleague worked very hard on the committee trying to get the legislation through and I certainly support and thank him for that.

When we talk about charities and solicitation, it is very important to understand the areas that we had to deal with when we were working on this legislation. We have registered charities and under the Income Tax Act, we can work with the revenues that are coming in. Under the Income Tax Act, we have a guide by which we can encourage everyone to move forward.

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If we were to use that section in the Income Tax Act and encourage those people who are raising funds for charitable purposes to register under the act, and have a legitimate sponsor for those collections, then they would have the opportunity to do the calling and that type of work. However, if they are not within the sphere of the Income Tax Act, if they are just not for profit organizations, that would open up a very wide spectrum of organizations which quite frankly would have been very difficult to have any control over.

When we talk about non profit groups, and we can have a myriad of all kinds of organizations, whether it is the firemen or the police in a community, or whether it is the guys playing baseball at the corner, they could be part of that organization of non profit who are raising funds for different purposes. There is no way we could have discriminated the value to Canadians.

In order to set a guideline or a framework under which we could operate and ensure that any funds were legitimately collected, we used the basis of the Income Tax Act. This is relatively consistent with other jurisdictions which have imposed do not call lists as well.

The effort here is to ensure that we look after registered charitable organizations which would function appropriately in the system, but also to ensure we do not get a large, wide section of abuse that could potentially occur with many other organizations that could have been registered as non profit.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the bill, the CRTC is authorized to engage and to contract out the administration. I am wondering whether or not there are provisions, either within the bill or within the proposed regulations, that would be made to ensure the protection of privacy of information. This issue of privacy is obviously extremely important and the member may also want to comment on the list itself to explain to Canadians whether this is one list for all or whether this is a list for each specific industry or company.

Hon. Jerry Pickard: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's comments are very relevant to the problem that we have had in the past. In the past, there were some 300 lists that one could register for. Bringing this into the spectrum of making it reasonable for the public, there will now be one list. That one list would be put in place and if someone registers on the do not call list, that will be circulated to all of the different companies. All of the groups would have to check in with that and any organizations that are making telephone calls would have to check with the do not call list, the one large list, to make certain that they do not interfere.

As I understand it, that list would be updated on a very regular basis, monthly or whatever time period in the short term, so that when people do register, other corporations have to go back and work in the system and get all of the new registrations that come in within a certain time period.

As well, there will be consultations with groups across the country on an ongoing basis to deal with other problems and other concerns that may come forward with that list. It is the mandate of the CRTC at this point in time to carry on public information sessions and to listen to concerns of the public, as well as set up the mechanisms by which organizations are going to operate the lists and will be able to work within the structure to ensure the application of the do not call list is carried out. All of the concerns that stem around general public

concerns will be answered through the organization that will be created. At this point in time, there will be public consultations and input accepted from the public in order to move this forward.

• (1225)

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to speak on a piece of legislation that has been a long time coming. As my colleagues who spoke earlier said, when we sat on committee, we all laboured with best intentions to get a piece of legislation that would be good for the Canadian public.

We know that no piece of legislation is perfect. This is one of those situations where this piece of legislation will be an improvement over the current situation.

This is the first speech in which I have the ability to speak a full 20 minutes in my short time in the House. I will take a few minutes to explain the overall general process that I take to approach all legislation. It is important for citizens to understand the overall philosophy and principle of their legislature and I will use as an example, of what is in many ways viewed as a non-ideological and non-philosophical piece of legislation, Bill C-37.

I will go through not only the technical aspects of the legislation, what specifically are the amendments and the overall intent of the bill, but the principles and thought processes I used to arrive at certain decisions to help me decide how to vote on the amendments to the bill.

I find it important to do this with any piece of legislation, no matter how mundane, for two reasons. I believe the principles of all legislation need to be dealt with.

First, one must deal with the principles in legislation because principles provide the logic of legislation for consistency in all law. If we do not deal from an objective principle basis when dealing with law, we end up with chaos. We end up with a purely utilitarian approach to the law and the law does not become a law of justice but becomes the law of the jungle. I think it is important to understand that if we are to have actual good legislation, we must always do it on a principle basis.

The second reason is accountability. As a voter, even as a committee member or as a member of this House, it is impossible to completely keep up on all pieces of legislation. The government and the bureaucracy is so vast that even committee work can sometimes seem like the details are weighing us down.

If one can reference certain key principles, certain key statements, certain key benchmarks to begin with, it helps to be accountable to the electorate because ultimately democracy is the voice of the people. Therefore, if the people can understand the principles, they can understand the fruits of those principles which is the applicable legislation.

I want to explain my thought process. Sometimes principles can come into collision with each other. There can be a little bit of weighing of principles and values and so forth. It is important to understand the thought process and the application because it enhances the accountability of the situation. I believe that accountability is what all members of this House stand for.

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It also helps to understand the weighing of the options. That is how I approach the overall body of the bill when dealing with each of these specific amendments. There is an intermixing of the practical in this in order to understand the logic as people in the future read this speech in *Hansard* or watch it on TV.

I endorse the underlying basic principle of this bill because ultimately, it is a protection of individual personal rights as to the rights of property. I come from the school of thought which has a belief in inalienable rights, balanced, as I have said before in this House, with inalienable responsibilities. One of the inalienable rights that are granted to all citizens is the right of personal property, protection, preservation and promotion of that personal property. This to some degree involves privacy.

Under the British common law concept, in this modern world, our home is our castle. This can sometimes be violated by our technology. We have derived and created various technologies, the Internet, the computer and the telephone for the specific purpose of enhancing our communications. However, there are times when they can all be intrusive and violate our home, our defence, our property, and the key right of an individual.

• (1230)

That is one reason why I specifically support the underlying general principle of this legislation. With the do not call legislation, we are allowing people to say, "My home is my castle. Thank you very kindly, but I do not wish to be bothered. This is my privacy. You are decreasing the enjoyment of my property".

There are other principles involved here: the principle of personal property, the free exchange of goods, and the property of other people. We have to have some interaction and some balance on that level.

The other thing is that it is not really about commercial transactions. There is the freedom of speech element, and this balances with what I would call the unalienable right of the citizen to liberty and the unalienable responsibility to liberty. This political discourse will come in as I talk about some of the exceptions because all these communication tools enhance liberty by letting us receive and transmit ideas for a free exchange of thought. The telephone has become one of those methods, with of course the Internet, the post office system, door-knocking, face to face communications and other elements. That is another principle that we deal with here, particularly when it comes to political thought.

When we get into the charitable exemptions element of this bill, I will deal with why I think responsibility to community gets involved in that, but there is a principle I believe involved on that level.

That is the overall basis and approach that I take to this. Every element must have some basis in principle. There must be some logic. There must be some application to this. What is my thought process and how did I apply it to each and every one of the specific exemptions put into the legislation: the who, the what, the why, et cetera?

One of the first amendments we made when we got to committee was to put in a three year review, not for some delegated powers to the CRTC or the bureaucracy but to bring the three year review under the authority of Parliament. I supported that. We could argue

about the timelines but that was more of a practical application of what would be the best purpose for it. I supported the underlying concept because it does provide for accountability right here in this House. The buck stops here, not just proverbially but in reality.

We are the elected representatives of the people of Canada. We cannot be delegating any more powers than we have to to the bureaucracy, to people who are not directly in that line. For practical purposes, yes, we can. We cannot have 308 persons running the entirety of the government, but we are the people who are responsible. We are the voice. We are one of the defenders, along with the law, the legal system, et cetera, of the basic unalienable rights and responsibilities of the people of Canada.

That is why I supported the concept of a review that comes to the House of Commons, delegated of course to the committee. It is very important for accountability because this piece of legislation, along with all legislation, is fallible. We are not all-knowing; we are not all-wise. We are very fallible as in previous legislation, so it is very important that the element of accountability be put in.

A second amendment that was put forward at committee was to exempt political parties, candidates, ridings, et cetera, from the do not call registry. Again there are exceptions. If people say "Please do not call me", that will be honoured. I will admit that part of my first thought was that this helps the challengers more than it helps the incumbents because we have better name recognition. So from a purely selfish perspective, the incumbents of this House should in many ways have a self-interest to oppose putting this in, but there is the balance of the unalienable political right of liberty and the unalienable responsibility of liberty that is applied here.

• (1235)

I will admit that for some people political calls can be some of the most annoying calls but the freedom of speech element must be protected everywhere, not just on the liberty side but on the responsibility side. It is the responsibility and duty of every citizen, if they want to have inalienable rights, to follow through on inalienable responsibilities, and that includes being fully aware and fully informed of the debate that is going on in the political process, the guarantor of the rights that underline and protect the property rights that underline the legislation. The candidates, the ridings and so forth all tend to blend in on that one level.

Again, there are good arguments as to why this should be a little more restricted but the underlying principles hold and the safeguard of allowing people to personally state that they do not wish to be called should be helpful on everything.

I will note the other exemption built in here, which is the one for polling and surveying. I would hope that when this comes up for a three year review that it will be looked at in a more detailed and thoughtful fashion. The reasoning I have on this is the following. Yes, it is important to have particular information to help in the processing of the dialogue and to help in the dialogue of what people are thinking so that everyone may know back and forth, and polling and surveying does, to a certain degree, help that.

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However a fairly interesting thing to note, on a very practical level, is the last two British elections where polling was done both by telephone and survey methods that we are accustomed to in Canada and by an Internet based pollster, YouGuv in particular. It was interesting to note that in the last couple of elections the Internet based pollster was the most accurate.

What I am saying is that perhaps in the future there could be less intrusive ways of still preserving the responsibility of liberty, the responsibility to gather information that there be a free and open dialogue of principle, and perhaps the Internet might be one of the ways because, spam mail notwithstanding, it is a somewhat less intrusive method than a phone call in the middle of supertime and intruding on one's life at that point.

Another exemption in the act is for charities. This is, again, a question. One of the things that was noted by a witnesses at committee was that when we actually ask people specifically what calls bother them, it tends to be much more the commercial transaction ones than the particular charities.

We all saw the generosity of Canadians when it came to some of the disasters overseas, such as the horrible and horrific tsunami that devastated Southeast Asia. One of the methods the charities use to gather funds is through the phones, which makes up a significant portion of their revenues. In fact, some of the charities were particularly concerned because this could have the devastating effect of wiping them out. I believe the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, if memory serves me correct, was one of the most articulate, but Mothers Against Drunk Driving, et cetera, were also put there.

What principle did I use when I was weighing my vote back and forth? I believe the inalienable right of property also has an inalienable responsibility of property, which is the responsibility to use it for the good, not just of oneself but for the whole community. Taxation does it by force but it is a more compassionate society when people do it willingly and based on an argument not of force but of grace. One of the reasons I supported it is that it does imply a responsibility of the electorate of the populace. Merely to put up a sign saying, "Please don't bother me", lowers the threshold of our level of responsibility, which is why I supported the underlying concept of exempting charities on that.

I will note again that when it comes to the charity exemption, individual call lists are kept by the charities, et cetera. Undoubtedly they will share these because there is no point calling persons who are considerably hostile and not particularly generous toward certain callers. Very practically, charities call those who have been the most generous.

• (1240)

The next exemption in the bill concerns the identification and purpose of organizations at the beginning of the call. I support this because of an honesty and integrity factor. Unfortunately, Canada has a reputation of being one of the major centres for call scams around the world. I believe this would increase the level of trust and the level of efficiency. It respects people's privacy and their right to utilize their property in a free and non-harassed way.

The final practical amendment to the legislation is the existing business relationship. We heard considerable concern in the

committee that even mom and pop operations would not be allowed to call their 50 or 60 customers or their close friends and so on. I do not think that was the intention of the bill. A mechanic would not be able to call up a neighbour to tell him that it has been so many years since he had his car fixed and that it should be taken care of, and so on.

There were also some very practical applications that people might not understand or completely remember. We can think of car dealerships when they have to call a customer because of a defect in an automobile that needs to be recalled. We would not want anything that might in the least way impinge on those business relationships.

Once someone has made a commercial transaction they have indicated a certain willingness already to deal with it. Again, the exceptions and so on can be dealt with on this.

I would note that all these amendments were made at committee, which disturbs me considerably. We often seem to get incomplete legislation being rushed through to committee. There does not seem to be a lot of thought. The government sees a headline, gets itself into an emergency and then tries to put something together without any thought.

We will see this later this week with Bill C-66, the home rebate bill where, after years of not thinking anything about energy policy or the cost to the population for home heating, et cetera, the government quickly pulled something out when it saw gasoline prices spiking.

Perhaps the government should take more time to think things out, to actually have a vision and not just react to every headline. A vision actually gets good legislation done years in advance.

Another comment I wish to make is about the administration of the system. We have seen the government's most famous long gun firearms registry balloon to I believe a cost of \$2 billion. I hope this registry is much better handled than that one.

The government has a reputation, which it has earned, of incompetence when it comes to administration, be it in its delegation to the crown corporations by choosing inadequate appointees or just the particular administration of contracts, be it advertising in Quebec or the firearms registry. I would caution the government to actually use some oversight and principles of administration that it has neglected in its previous endeavours.

Those are the principal and practical reasons that I support the legislation and will be voting for it.

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However I would caution all members of the House to be careful how we proceed with this one. On a personal note, one summer when I was in university I had finished my tree planting and was waiting for my cheque and I needed to turn a little extra cash. I worked in a call centre for about six weeks while taking an intercession class at the University of Saskatchewan. The one thing we should remember is that many people earn their living from these places. We should be very sensitive to anyone who may be unemployed due general overall economic conditions. Many of these people who receive a minimum wage or slightly more are not well represented in the House of Commons.

I do not think many members in the House came from minimum wage backgrounds and perhaps we should remember the economic effects as we pass legislation and be somewhat cognizant about the people this may affect in the long term. I think with the exemptions and the way it is handled it will provide a reasonable way to handle it.

• (1245)

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have one observation for the hon. member. Is it not encouraging to see a first time member of Parliament stand in the House and say clearly and unequivocally that he will evaluate legislation on the basis of principle, not simply take a position on particular legislation, whether it is partisan or otherwise, and that he will look at the principle that is involved first and make sure the people understand why he voted a particular way by enunciating what those principles will be? I want to commend the hon. member for making it so abundantly clear as to how he will do certain things.

At the end of his speech he talked about the compassion that we should be directing toward those who are working in call centres. Even though many people object to getting these phone calls, he says that is how some people make a living, and that is important.

When the hon. member worked in a call centre like that did he find that it was a rewarding experience? We like to work, we want to work and the hon. member received a little extra money for doing that. I wonder if he could tell us exactly what his experience was in terms of a personal relationship with the people he called.

Mr. Bradley Trost: Madam Speaker, having had the pleasure of serving on committee with the hon. member, who is a fairly long serving member of the House, a lot of my growth as a member has been because of him personally and from watching him and other veteran members in the House, in committee and in public.

My personal experience was somewhat interesting. I always enjoy people, period. I can be a somewhat reserved person in some atmospheres but I enjoyed the people, particularly the ones who had been working in the job for two, three, four and five years. They had house payments or car payments, more or less, and were working in call centres basically as a career. About half of the workforce were people like myself, students, part time rotation, short term, et cetera.

It was interesting to hear from the people who were there for longer periods. They took real pride in their work, which is what we should all remember when we are not altogether happy about being interrupted because of one of these phone calls. These people work very hard but they are not the ones who make the major profits. They are just trying to do their best to earn income and to fulfill their

obligations to their families and to their bosses in doing their job in the most professional way they can. I actually found it a useful experience in that respect, to see people's dedication to jobs that unfortunately are sometimes mocked as "Mc" jobs.

The people who were there for many years took a very professional attitude toward it. They always arrived on time and made sure the work was done precisely, and that they were courteous, respectful and professional on the phones. That is not to criticize the more transient student population but our effort, energy and level of responsibility was not there.

I found it quite interesting in that respect and I commend the people who did it. It was a useful experience for me and it taught me how to relate to people on the phone and how to react and be sensitive when interrupting people at different times of the day. If one wanted to meet one's quota for the hours, one had to be sensitive to the people on the other end of the phone. I think those were the two things it taught me: sensitivity to the customer, the person at the other end; and a respect for the people who work in this as a career for longer periods.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-37, an act to amend the Telecommunications Act, and thus to participate in the debate on third reading.

I will start, if I may, by congratulating all parties for their unanimity on the amendment:

That Bill C-37, in Clause 1, be amended by replacing lines 23 to 26 on page 3 with the following:

"paragraph (c) for an electoral district;

f) made for the sole purpose of collecting information for a survey of members of the public; or

(g) made for the sole purpose of soliciting a subscription for a newspaper of general circulation."

This amendment has already been referred to by my colleague and vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, Science and Technology, the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, who was very keen on it. His argument then—and now—is that first of all it is an improvement to the bill and second it reflects the wishes of the public.

There has been much consultation on this subject. Nearly 80% of the Quebec or Canadian population were in favour of this bill. With this amendment, this bill is thus completed. Furthermore, this amendment responds to the desires of the committee. You will recall that there was unanimity on this subject and that the amendment had been abandoned for purely technical reasons. Therefore, once again, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to congratulate all of the parties for having agreed to this amendment.

Government Orders

Second, my colleague indicated earlier that the bill would permit the CRTC to administer databases. This is important, particularly with respect to two very specific objectives, namely to prohibit or regulate the use of telecommunications facilities. First, such use must be regulated up to an honest and objective point. Second, any Canadian carrier or any person must be prohibited from engaging in unsolicited telecommunications. That is what we are talking about. This is an extremely important step for the future.

There is a second aspect to this bill: it will provide for penalties. The severity of those penalties should dissuade persons who engage deliberately or fraudulently in unsolicited telecommunications.

My colleague indicated earlier that one of our roles as members of Parliament is to legislate so as to protect the interests of consumers. In that regard, we all know how constantly our fellow citizens are being solicited, mainly by telephone, or by fax. I have received such calls, as I am sure you all have. Families and children under age 18 are also highly solicited—be it for credit cards or pressure buying. The problem exists.

Not only is Parliament responsible for passing legislation in this matter and regulating telecommunications, but it may also prohibit fraudulent telecommunications. This is very difficult. It comes more under the Criminal Code. All the same, we have to send a very clear message that Parliament, Canada, will no longer tolerate these fraudulent telecommunications.

One need only check a few statistics to realize that, at present, Canada is a haven for fraudulent telemarketing. For example, Montreal is the North American hub for unsolicited or fraudulent telemarketing. According to an RCMP investigation, nearly 90% of the premises and facilities for these con artists are to be found in Montreal.

This bill will sound the alarm. After evaluation, however, we will have to be able to take very productive action on this subject. These fraudsters have illicit revenue estimated at \$60 million, with individuals easily earning \$5,000 a week.

At the moment, the section in the Code allows these criminals to get off with just a very light fine or a short term of imprisonment. So it is difficult in Canada to convict this type of criminal. Furthermore they are very often repeat offenders.

• (1255)

When a bill provides ways of getting around the law, repeat offenders continue to come out on top. They get rich at the expense of those who, unfortunately, are the most vulnerable in our society. Some very honest people are easily fleeced by these professional con artists.

The bill provides for administrative monetary penalties. This is also linked to the authority to investigate, inspect and enforce. We are convinced this will be effective. This is in the bill. Again, this will be instrumental in putting a stop to these crimes.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of Bill C-37, as is the Canadian Marketing Association. As we have already mentioned, we support this for a number of reasons.

One of our primary concerns is consumer protection, which we feel is essential. There are other reasons. As I was saying earlier, statistics show that the telemarketing industry employed some 270,000 people in Canada in the year 2000, which is quite significant. This industry plays a role in the economy and has done \$16 billion worth of business. It therefore has a considerable impact on communities in Canada and Quebec. If a bill is passed that sets out principles of use and possible penalties for such a large industry, then we will have been effective.

The Bloc Québécois and the Canadian Marketing Association are in favour of this bill. We know that the big players are involved in this association, which is currently the largest marketing industry association in Canada. Its member companies contribute to the Canadian economy by essentially providing 480,000 jobs and by making more than \$51 billion in annual sales. These companies have also said they are in favour of this bill.

This association is also a powerful lobby for the marketing sector. Like the Bloc Québécois, it has said that it supports Bill C-37, while at the same time having certain concerns regarding the powers given to the CRTC in the area of regulations. This will have to be monitored closely to ensure that the bill remains as realistic in its final form as in its purpose.

As far as committee proceedings are concerned, the Bloc Québécois helped get the bill amended, to include the necessary exemptions for charities and the media for example. For a bill to be significant, it has to cover all that has to be covered, respect freedom of expression and involve everyone concerned.

Like the Canadian Marketing Association, however, the Bloc Québécois also has some reservations. This is fundamental. Obviously, the bill deals with the registration process. The Bloc Québécois would like the mechanism for putting the registry in place and the associated costs to be clearly stated.

When we talk about the registry, of course, this includes the operation, implementation, monitoring and other costs associated with this registry. Hon. members will recall the gun registry. That was not a very pleasant experience. We have seen the money wasted on that. Originally, it was supposed to cost between \$2 million and \$3 million. Now, estimates are in the billions of dollars.

When administering a registry, one has to beware of costs. Right from the start, the costs have to be planned and established as realistically as possible. The same is true for the registry's operation. It is imperative that the registry be under the responsibility of an independent organization. We are wary in this regard.

Government Orders

•(1300)

Administration of the registry and everything related to the do not call list must be free of any electoral or partisan intent. This is what the Bloc Québécois is concerned about. Even though the Canadian Marketing Association wants to be entrusted with managing the system that will be established to administer this list, that is not necessarily our preference. The institution that will be in charge must demonstrate greater independence. We must avoid falling into the same situation we have in the oil industry. In this case, a private organization has provided the information in good faith. Eventually, one always gets back to certain protected interests or interests that are in these institutions. In the view of Canadians, the institution that will supervise the registry must be above all suspicion in order to be credible. We must not commit the same mistake that was made with the gun registry. We must arrange things so that the organization responsible for establishing this registry is seen as having the necessary independence, its mandate is clear, and it is managed according to ethical principles.

The Bloc Québécois also wants the law to cover as many people as possible and to be administered in a very fair way. It is interesting to see that all the political parties supported this bill and the amendment. We recognized, first, that there was a problem, that Canadian and Quebec consumers had a serious problem in this regard or as consumers. While taking freedom of expression into account, I think that it is just as important to combat harassment and fraud.

We were speaking earlier about consent for this national list, which is at the heart of this bill. The Canadian Marketing Association has shown beyond any doubt, once again on the basis of a survey, that this bill is important to Canadians and Quebecers. In the Industry Canada background documents on this bill, an Environics poll done in 2004 showed that 79% of the respondents said they were in favour of the national do not call list and 66% said they were likely to subscribe to such a service. That is very revealing. Ninety-seven per cent of Canadians said that they were annoyed by unsolicited telemarketing calls.

When there is a bill as important as this, which covers virtually all areas of consumer protection regarding unsolicited telecommunications, it is important to support it. The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this bill. We are very happy that there was unanimous support for the proposed amendment. I would also like to ask our colleagues to vote in favour of this bill, which will benefit all Canadians and all Quebecers.

•(1305)

Mr. Réal Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask this of the hon. member. Should there be a registry of names of persons who no longer wish to be solicited in future, what would be the terms of operation of that registry? Second, by whom would it be administered? And third, what might be the estimated costs of such a method?

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse for his question.

When we speak of a registry, there are obviously three points to look at. As has been mentioned, there is the make-up of the

administration and the operation of the registry. Also, who is responsible for it, and what are the costs. We are trying to determine how it will operate. A committee will be in charge of operations. The Bloc Québécois and various members of the Committee think that an independent organization is needed to manage this registry.

As for costs, we must also be vigilant and realistic. I spoke earlier of the firearms registry. That is an example which has shown us how big a cost overrun can be. At one point we were talking about millions of dollars, and we ended up at \$2 billion. We will have to be very realistic and rigorous in this regard.

I think that the only way to respond to these criteria, that is, administration, operations and costs, is to do so together, including both Parliament and the persons concerned. This will allow us to work toward unanimity on all the regulations by which the registry will function.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with regard to the operations, this has come up during debate at both second and third reading.

I do not know if the committee looked into some possibilities, but under the Income Tax Act and on the income tax form itself, Canadians have the opportunity to tick off whether or not they would agree to information on their returns being used by the Chief Electoral Officer in terms of updating electoral lists. I wonder whether or not that came up at committee with regard to using the income tax return for information about whether or not the taxpayer wishes to be put on the do not call list.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must say that I was not part of the committee. Therefore I cannot answer this question. Someone would have to look into it.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on Bill C-37, an act to amend the Telecommunications Act, now at third reading stage in Parliament. It has had several amendments made to it, including one today that provides an exemption for the newspaper industry, which I am glad to support.

As well, the bill has been part of a committee process that I think has been quite fruitful in making sure that this bill was changed significantly from its original form to its current form, and I believe that it will be passed by a unanimous vote in the House of Commons. All major political parties are supporting the bill. I think there is also support for this bill from the industry itself. I hope that it will get the support of Canadians.

It is the first time that this country will be creating a do not call registry with specific elements which will add penalties and an administration system that is accountable to and also will also report back to Parliament on a regular basis. Not only will the CRTC, once it has this system up and operating, have the responsibility of reporting back to Parliament, but the legislation itself will be reviewed entirely in three years, thanks to an amendment that the NDP proposed and which was supported by everyone else.

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This is important because the bill proposes a significant change for not only the rights of individuals in their homes but also potentially for two other sectors, the first one being the call centres that employ Canadians across this country. The second would be the charitable organizations and businesses that rely upon this type of venue in terms of telephone solicitation, as an opportunity to either support their causes and/or secure and procure business or expand upon it for their companies, resulting in profits and jobs for the communities.

These are important discussions that have to take place on a regular basis, because significant shifts could take place in the Canadian economy and alter Canadian lives and objectives. Individuals may have rights in their homes protected further, but charitable organizations could have repercussions to services, and lastly, businesses could too.

With that, I do want to highlight the general public support out there for a do not call registry. In many respects, Canadians have been bombarded by the growth of this industry and the intrusions that it can create in their lives. I think we have all experienced sitting down for dinner to spend some quality time with our families, only to be interrupted by telephone solicitation. Sometimes we are okay with that and other times we are not.

That is why I think the introduction of this legislation as a solid first step is important. At home, in our basic place of residence, which we work every single day to provide for ourselves and our families, we should have the right of protection. That is going to be the first step. We as individuals pay for our homes and for the services of the telephone company operation we subscribe to. We pay for the hardware in our homes, but it is then used as a vehicle to tap into our personal and private lives. That is an issue of civil liberties. There is an element of intrusion into our most important place, our personal residence, and that needs to be looked at.

Also, in our committee we have heard testimony over the duration of the months during which we have dealt with this. Some businesses are predicating upon other businesses and the fact is that it creates problems in the workforce, not only in terms of time management, with time taken up by unsolicited phone calls that are trying to procure additional business, but also in terms of the relationships and the dynamics at a company. In that case, individuals who are in different positions in the company are making decisions about who should or should not contact them about different types of businesses. As well, we have heard indirectly through testimony about faxing, email and spam also contributing to frustration, not only in homes but also in businesses.

• (1310)

A 2003 Environics study showed that 81% of respondents reported receiving unsolicited calls, on average receiving 3.43 calls per week. That was in 2003 before there was an explosion of the industry in terms of more companies using access to telephone numbers to move their products and services. As well, charitable organizations did it too, as they were finding it more difficult to raise funds like they had done traditionally through other venues. In my constituency in Windsor, Ontario, the bingo industry suffered significant losses and challenges due to public policy. As well, there were tourism and border issues that affected not only the

tourism industry itself but also the charitable organizations that depend upon it to provide services in the community.

It is important to note what services these charitable organizations are actually providing. Their lost revenue is a loss to the community in terms of what individuals have decided to do in joining together to raise funds to attack a social problem or an issue that is localized or very specific in terms of the remediation that they want to perform in their communities. The loss of these revenue streams has caused significant changes. In the bingo industry it has presented significant challenges in Windsor, Ontario, as well as lost revenues for charitable organizations.

We do know that there has been an increase in calls, with the largest segment of calls from charitable organizations, at 44%. We know that they are particularly vulnerable under the bill. I would take the opportunity at this point to note that charitable organizations contribute significantly to the Canadian economy. It is important to note not just the fact that they do affect individual lives through the programs and services they provide, but also the fact that the entire Canadian economy is significantly impacted.

For example, I will quote Imagine Canada's submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Natural Resources, Science and Technology on May 4, 2005. It said:

Cumulatively, nonprofit and voluntary sector groups contribute \$75.9 billion annually to the national economy—\$34.7 billion if such institutional charities as hospitals, universities and colleges are excluded. This constitutes 8.5% of GDP; 4.0% excluding institutional charities.

This is not an issue just for softball teams or community organizations and groups. Let us say, for example, that it is the Lions Clubs or the different types of Rotary Clubs or groups and organizations that might use some type of system employing telephone solicitation. But hospitals and universities and other types of institutions also require the additional funds derived through either a campaign of giving or of contacting alumni and making cold calls to people outside of their universe to expand their internal revenue sources in order to meet the demands and public policy applied to them, as well as the general goals of society. For example, the colleges and universities training our young people for the future, to meet the demands of a changing economy, have to reduce themselves to being active in these types of venues at times to make sure they can provide those services.

I would also note a specific example of a vulnerable charity, that of MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, with over 90% of its funds raised through personal donations. That was the testimony of Dawn Regan, director of finance and fundraising for MADD Canada. She said:

Last year we made 775,000 cold calls in our outreach program and MADD Canada received complaints by less than one-half of one per cent of those we called.

That is a massive campaign, very much related to the type of work MADD does, and if it is in jeopardy because of this bill we will see MADD going to the CRTC with an application to make sure that they are going to be exempted so they will not be frozen out. It will have to make major adjustments to its actual operations.

Government Orders

It is important to note that when we looked at the first changes to the bill back at first reading, it was the intent at the time for the government to create two types of lists that would be on the do not call registry, one with a complete element that would have all of the different charities pooled into one and separated. There was criticism of that. I give the government credit for listening to the opposition parties, as well as those individuals who provided testimony at the committee, and making the change to Bill C-37 so that this would not happen. Hence, we have an improved bill.

● (1315)

The CRTC will be responsible for creating the independent body. I am somewhat concerned about that. The really important measure is that it will be able to impose fines on individuals and companies. There will be automatic mandatory penalties. This will put some focus on those that are doing the abusive telephone solicitation, which is what has created some of the ill will regarding telephone solicitation.

A committee member noted previously that regarding these intrusions that usually the person on the other end of the line is someone who is often trying to provide for his or her family. It is someone who wants to be productive and is involved in a very successful and growing industry. However, at times we find the calls frustrating.

What is important about this change is that it imposes administrative monetary penalties, AMPs. This is different from the situation right now with the Canadian Marketing Association which has only a voluntary list and does not have those penalties.

It is important because those people, companies or charities who are abusive will have to deal with the complaints and the penalties within a short period of time. There is a two year timeframe for resolution to make some type of decision on a claim.

I know it takes a long time to get through the system and it probably seems very long for the individual who has made the complaint. Multiple complaints about a person or a company can stack up. Hopefully, with the original complaint process and the fact that the investigation will take place we would see the behaviour adapt. Otherwise it will take a maximum of two years to get from the complaint to the final adjudication of whether or not it has happened and whether it is valid. That could be frustrating. It will cause the industry to be more accountable and many Canadians are talking about accountability these days.

One of the Environics polls indicated that 38% of people said they tolerated telemarketers, 35% of people were annoyed by telemarketers and 24% of people said they hated telemarketers. We know we have a significant issue here from Canadians who are expressing some dissatisfaction. This is another reason that all parties support this bill. It is one that I would like to reflect upon in terms of what has happened in the United States.

I think the U.S. has had a successful introduction. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission allowed for a national do not call registry in late 2002 and it began in October 2003. Over 62 million Americans registered their phone numbers in the first year. A survey reported that 92% reported fewer telemarketing calls. U.S. telemarketers are required to scrub telephone numbers from their

calling lists every three months and are charged fees for access to the do not call registry.

It is also important to note that the registry itself will be paid for by the users of the registry. We have had discussions about the costs of other registries and their implications to Canadian taxpayers. This registry will be paid for by the industry.

We have to make sure that when the CRTC is setting up the registry that it is efficient. The problems that will be associated with the charities and the business organizations will be compounded if the registry is not efficient. They will potentially be going through a transition, depending upon their industry, related to this legislation. At the same time they will also have to pay which could lead to a compounding system.

The United States has a registry. In Canada I believe the CRTC is to have the registry up and running within 19 months. Nineteen months was the target date expressed at committee to have it set up so that Canadians could start to register and have that screening process evolve. Following that there will be the three year review which will take place in the House of Commons. A report must also be tabled in the House of Commons within six months after the end of each fiscal year.

● (1320)

There will be some ongoing information once we pass the bill that will keep it very much primed. It will not move away from this House for five years or more with very little to do in terms of parliamentary business.

That has been one thing I have expressed some difficulty with on the issue of regulations. When we pass regulations in different bills, often parliamentarians do not get to see the effects of whether the regulations are having the influence or are following the right process in the legislation that we passed. That is currently being done atrociously in our drug industry. One of the issues at the industry committee was the continued evergreening and the draconian laws that affect our generic drug industry versus the pharmaceutical companies. This bill makes sure that we would review the legislation on a regular basis.

I do want to point out that call centres created 40,000 new jobs between 2002 and 2003 and forecasts are for a 7.9% growth in the industry over the next three years. The Canadian customer contact centre study noted that 90% of the call centres have an inbound focus, being hotel reservations, help desks, et cetera, and that only 10% deal with making outbound calls. Of that 10% of the centres that make outbound calls, 50% of those are to the U.S. We have an industry that is very important to the Canadian economy and it has been growing. Once again, I think it is important to be taking a first step in this bill that is a little more timid in the sense that there will be some exemptions. Some changes to the bill might happen later on.

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I will conclude my speech by noting a couple of different points related to the industry. There were changes noted to the business relationships and I congratulate the government and all committee members for doing so. There were reservations expressed by the Canadian Association of Direct Response Insurers, H&R Block Canada and a series of other small businesses which have different types of relationships with customers that were not necessarily what we would normally think them to be. Some of them have contact with their clients in a matter of months, and for others it is years. It differs depending on the industry.

There were some amendments made that really improve this bill. This is something that we can point toward. On many days it is like a soap opera in the House of Commons and there is a lot of discussion about high profile things. At the same time when parliamentarians work together, we can accomplish things that are often in the best interests of all parties. The Standing Committee on Industry, Natural Resources, Science and Technology did a good job on this bill. I thank the chair of the committee for making sure that we completed this legislation.

This is something that was in the New Democratic Party's election platform. We are certainly happy that we have been able to be part of this for Canadians. We look forward to making sure that the bill really works for us. We will be calling for supports if there are harmful effects from this intervention on the industry, charitable organizations and businesses. We believe that our role has not finished in this regard. Our role has just begun. We are happy that this is something that can be rolled out to Canadians very soon.

• (1325)

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member was a hard-working member of the committee and asked many thoughtful questions and made many very useful interventions. There is one intervention for which we did not receive an answer, at least I do not recall receiving one but perhaps he does. The question has to do with the cost of the registry itself.

It seems that this registry is supposed to be self-supporting in terms of the money that it generates, in that the people who are involved will pay for the services rendered. It is something like a \$2 million initial fee to set it up, or something like that, I am not quite sure. The hon. member probably remembers in detail.

Would the member speculate about the possible costs after it is set up? It seems that the firearms registry was originally supposed to cost \$2 million, which is a number somewhat similar to the present one, and that one I think has mushroomed to a number that is way beyond the \$2 million. I think it is approaching \$2 billion now. I wonder if the hon. member could tell us what he thinks will happen to the actual cost of the do not call registry.

• (1330)

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country and I have been on the industry committee for a couple of years and I have enjoyed his interventions there as well.

The hon. member has raised a very good point. The testimony we had regarding the cost was vague. Between \$1.5 million to \$2 million was the suggested cost in setting it up. It does seem eerily

familiar in terms of other registries set up by the government. That is why we insisted on an early review of it.

It is very important to note that a big change could happen in terms of some of the charitable organizations or businesses in that their calls may whittled down, but at the same time they will have to pay for this registry. Small businesses are affected by this and they would not necessarily have the same resources in structure or finances to weather the storm of change as some larger businesses might have. It could be significant. That burden cannot be passed on to them alone. There has to be a greater accountability.

The CRTC seemed a little surprised that it would be enrolled through that system. It begs the question, is that the best vehicle for doing this? Will it have the proper support from the government under its current mandate as well as this additional duty to do the job effectively and not pass off a system that might become so dysfunctional or difficult to deal with that the costs escalate quite significantly?

There are two issues here. I spoke extensively about those groups and organizations that could be affected and I will not reiterate that. I would point out that it could lead to a list which is not very good for the Canadian public, if it is not updated as often as it should be, if it is not as accurate as it should be, or if it is not as accountable as it should be. All of those things could lead to greater frustration by the Canadian public about the value of a do not call list. If that happens, there would be an erosion of Canadian confidence in the registry, as we have seen with the long gun registry. There would be further frustration out there.

That is why we should focus on the fact that there has to be reports back to Parliament. That is not sufficient in itself, though it was the reason we insisted upon the three year review.

Quite frankly, this would mean a significant shift in our GDP if there are major changes and businesses and charitable organizations lose access to revenue. It affects not only the employees but also the services in our communities related to funds generated through telephone solicitation.

Once again, the reason that the New Democrats support it and I believe everybody in the House of Commons supports it is that at the end of the day we should have some ability to choose how we are contacted in our homes. That is why we are supporting the bill.

The hon. member raised a very important question in that it can erode the confidence of the Canadian public if the system becomes one that is not sufficiently able to keep up with the workload. We have to ensure that it will be accountable to the taxpayers.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned a significant negative impact on charities as a consequence of the bill. I am pretty sure that under new section 41.7, which lists the exemptions, registered charities under the meaning of section 248(1) of the Income Tax Act are exempt.

Would the member care to clarify what he said, that this would adversely affect charities?

Government Orders

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to clarify that because it is one of the things on which I have frustration with the government. It has separated the charities. Those not registered as charities under the Income Tax Act will have the possibility of being completely denied access to telephone solicitation. We are talking about firefighters associations, police associations, the Lions clubs and a whole series of groups like Greenpeace and MADD. A number of groups and organizations may not necessarily get the exemptions.

We have been pushing for provincial standards. For example, in the province of Alberta they are considered the same. We have another bill related to federal income tax incorporation which eventually will bring these other groups into line with those types of current procedures.

We believe we should not be tiering charitable organizations like that. If the CRTC, when it has its hearings with the company that is procured to do this, blocks some of these charitable organizations out, then we will see them left with no ability to raise funds in the way they have done in the past.

That is important. At times, some of these organizations use telephone solicitation to not only to reach their current donor groups but also to expand them. They can do that through small contracts. They employ a contractor for example to do a region, and they take advantage of that.

I used to work for a telephone solicitation marketing company which did charitable procurement for our firefighters. It was contracted out to sell circus tickets so the firefighters association burn victims program would be able to raise funds. It was able to do that regionally, which was necessary.

I hate to see those types of opportunities denied to these groups and associations, which is the potential with the bill. There are anomalies that could affect those groups and organizations. That is why the review is important. We could have a series of groups and organizations that have lost their stream of revenue or that cannot expand upon their system coming back to Parliament. That is a reality we are dealing with in the bill. Having the differentiation between them is the reason for that.

• (1335)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have found the debate so far to be very constructive. I am pleased that all parties appear to be in support of Bill C-37, the do not call list legislation, for the obvious reasons. Canadians are absolutely fed up with the intrusions on their personal lives.

I will comment briefly about the bill and then address the issue about registries and the relationship some members have drawn between the firearms registry and the do not call registry. As well, I will comment on the point raised by the member in his speech with regard to the impact of Bill C-37 on charities, which is not exactly a fair reflection of what we are talking about. These organizations are not for profit and are not registered charities. They do not issue receipts but fundraise for charitable purposes. That is the difference.

Based on polls cited by Industry Canada, 97% of Canadians have a negative reaction to these kinds of calls. Anyone with a valid

telephone number will get a call and it will come at the worst possible time. All hon. members have received those kinds of calls.

Under the existing regulatory framework, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission is responsible for this area. The CRTC definition of telemarketing is the use of telecommunication facilities to make unsolicited calls for the purpose of solicitation where solicitation is defined as selling or promoting a product or service or soliciting money or moneys worth whether directly or indirectly and whether on behalf of another party. This includes solicitation for donations by or on behalf of charitable organizations. That is the way the law exists today.

As many members have noted, the industry committee has made a number of changes. These substantial changes have been highlighted on the reprint that came back from committee.

Current CRTC regulations state that telemarketers must remove a customer's name and telephone number from their calling lists upon request. Most members are well aware that it is pretty difficult for someone to get a word in edgewise with a telemarketer. If an individual has not given some indication that there is some interest in listening to the rest of the message, that call is terminated fairly quickly. Clearly something had to be done.

Under the current regulations, telemarketers who fail to comply with that regulation or other regulations can have their service suspended or disconnected by the telecommunications service provider. Penalties range anywhere from \$10,000 to \$250,000.

Telemarketing is a very lucrative business. About 18% of telemarketing calls result in some business being done. That is the reason why many telemarketing businesses are opposed to the legislation. It will impact their business.

• (1340)

The commission observed specifically that there would be better enforcement if the commission itself imposed appropriate fines on telemarketers that breached the rules. This is included in the bill. There also is the ability for the commission to delegate various administrative duties. It means that another independent organization could be established to administer the operations and administration of the do not call list. This is yet to be determined. I know a number of questions have been raised about the operations, the administration and certainly the cost.

As indicated at committee stage, a number of changes were made. When one thinks about it, the bill would establish a do not call list and would provide the legislative framework for the creation of the list and the administration of a national do not call list. This is important because now we would provide a one-instrument vehicle in which Canadians could say that they wanted to be on the list because they did not want to receive unsolicited calls from people trying to sell them goods or services for profit.

The major changes that have been made to the bill by the committee have to do with exemptions. The member who spoke previously talked about the exemptions, most significantly the exemption for a registered charity within the meaning of section 248 of the Income Tax Act.

Government Orders

We all understand the importance of charitable giving. I also have received a number of interventions from charitable groups and organizations that have registered charities, have a licence number and are able to issue receipts to Canadians who patronize their organizations, whether it be the local hospital, the Red Cross, the Terry Fox campaign or whatever it might be. These kinds of things the committee believe, and I think Canadians would acknowledge, are very significant instruments which have been used by the charitable sector to seek support for their charities.

The member who just spoke stated that there would be some impairment on the charitable sector. That is not exactly the case for a registered charity. We are talking about not for profit organizations that may very well do what would be characterized as charitable work or community service work. He mentioned, for example, the local Lions Club or Mothers Against Drunk Driving, et cetera. These organizations are not registered charities. They would not be exempt and would have to apply.

They are eligible, however, to apply to register as a charity and to have the full exemption that other charities enjoy. To the extent that traditional telemarketing techniques are a principal source of their revenue, it may very well be in their interest to register as a charity pursuant to section 248(1) of the Income Tax Act.

Three other exemptions that have not been talked about very much are also important. Political parties would be exempt. This probably will not excite a lot of the public because that means political parties will be able to continue to utilize their broadcast calling techniques for support purposes. A nomination contestant, a leadership contestant or a candidate of a political party also would be exempt, as well as an association of members of a political party. Therefore, the local riding associations would be exempt.

Under the Canada Elections Act, we have laws which try to enhance and promote our democratic electoral system. It is extremely important. I know members have come across the situation from time to time where they meet resistance. It might be a superintendent of a particular apartment building who says that he does not want anyone disturbing the residents. Under the elections law, candidates have the legal right to access the electors. It is here to complement existing law and it received the support of all parties.

• (1345)

Although it may seem like an exception that maybe Canadians were not thinking about, I very much expect that they would understand that it is important that those who seek to represent them at any political level of government have the ability to communicate with people using the telephone and why it would not be prohibited under this act.

The bill contains substantial definitions consequential to the exemptions that I mentioned. There are some administrative, monetary penalties that I am not going to go through. Members have already handled this very well.

The issue of funding has come up as well. The registry is expected to be funded on a cost recovery basis from the telemarketers themselves. As I have indicated, about 18% of the calls they make do generate revenue for them. It is a very substantial business and obviously there has been a reaction to this, but there appears to be

considerable support for the do not call list. In a survey that Environics did on behalf of the Government of Canada, 79% of the respondents queried on telemarketing supported a national do not call list and 66% of the respondents said that they would likely sign up for this service.

There are a number of important priorities to balance. Obviously, it is important for telemarketers to be able to do their business, but there does come a point in time in which there is an intrusion which is beyond reasonable. Anybody who is in political life knows that prime time is during the dinner hour. This is when most people will get their calls. I am not sure what others' experiences are, but I consider phone calls to my home to be important. I ensure that I answer the phone within a reasonable period of time and it is quite a disappointment to be called away from dinner or from my family to answer a call from somebody who cannot pronounce my name.

I would mention that there is a proviso under the bill which says:

Any person making a telecommunication referred to in subsection (1)—

That means people who are entitled to do this.

—must, at the beginning of the telecommunication, identify the purpose of the telecommunication and the person or organization on whose behalf the telecommunication is made.

Therefore, even with regard to those who have an exemption under this, people are going to get, for the first time, information about who they are being called on behalf of and what this is all about. I think that is extremely important because often it starts off with “Hi, how are you” and a few other things to find out whether or not this is possibly a reasonable time to get our attention.

It is part of the marketing technique, but it is very clear that if people know right off the bat who they are being contacted on behalf of and the organization is identified, even from those who are authorized to make these calls, it will give Canadians an opportunity to indicate whether or not they are interested at all and to get off the phone and back to their families or their meal.

I suggested that some telemarketers did not support this legislation. There were some comments made by them. One suggested that the current rules for telemarketing are sufficient to regulate marketers, through voluntary means or company specific do not call lists that had been an industry standard for years among legitimate firms. That is an interesting statement for someone to have made, but the fact remains that 97% of Canadians have said they are annoyed by receiving these calls, so the current regulations are not working. This is not a valid position to be taken by the telemarketing industry.

It was further argued that being on a do not call list removes a customer's chance to learn about new products and services that could improve their lives in some way. It removes a business opportunity to reach a consumer direction.

Government Orders

• (1350)

I am sure that it does remove an opportunity, but all of a sudden now there is this balance between a consumer's right not to be effectively harassed. It seems that most people who have a need for a product or a service have ample opportunity, through the flyers in the various newspapers or that are deposited in their mailboxes or through the yellow pages or through the advertising that happens on television or radio or whatever, to apprise themselves of who is in the business and where they can get it. I really do not believe that is a compelling reason for this do not call list to proceed.

Some of the commentators have pointed out that there is an alternative to adding more regulation or more bureaucracy. When called by a telemarketer, an individual may request to be put on the company's do not call list and then hang up. In fact, that is the current regulation. Someone can make a specific request and under the current CRTC regulations telemarketers must do that, so I am a little concerned that even the telemarketing industry for some odd reason does not understand that these arrangements are already in place.

There are a number of organizations, particularly the Canadian Marketing Association, which support this legislation. It also represents the telemarketing group as well. Looking at what is necessary here, there is probably ample evidence that even the industry itself realizes that there is a balance to be maintained and that it should be self-funded by the telemarketing industry, and that there should be penalties for those who do not follow the legislation.

Let me conclude with regard to the costs. A number of members have suggested that while we know how bad registries can be, look at this terrible national gun registry and how much it costs. It was only supposed to cost \$2 million and it actually cost \$2 billion. However, when someone hears that, it seems to be incredible. How could that possibly happen? What they do not say, and watch the temperature of the water go up in here, is that there was a very significant backlash to establishing a national firearms registry. Handguns had been registered since 1966, I believe.

The additional registry was to register long arms. Let me suggest that long arms were in fact the addition to it. I was here at the time when Alan Rock was the justice minister. It really surprised me that criminal activity using long arms was actually greater than for handguns. I know that today criminal activity due to the use of long arms actually is half of what it was prior to the gun registry coming into effect.

I know that over 90% of the applications to register firearms under the new registry were deliberately submitted with errors on them to the extent that we could not have them processed electronically. This meant that human resources had to be hired in extensive numbers to process them manually and to contact all of the registrants.

I would suggest that when the lobby against having a national gun registry counsels gun owners to falsify information or to make mistakes on their registry applications so that it messes up the system, it is going to cost more money. It is like the demonstrators in the Los Angeles riots. The local people were trashing their own neighbourhood and said, "there, take that". Well, yes, it did take more money to do it.

What are the consequences? We do know that long arm crime has gone down. We do know that front line policing officers consult and go to the national firearms registry on an average of 5,000 times each and every day. That is over 1.8 million consultations with the national gun registry. Furthermore, one would ask, why is it that front line police officers would want to go and look at the national firearms register?

• (1355)

I can think of some examples. For instance, if I am a police officer and I am called to a particular address for an incident of some sort, I want to consult the registry to find out whether or not there is a firearm in that home and whether or not I should take specific precautions. I also want to know that if I find guns, whether or not I can find out whether a firearm has been properly registered and, if not, whether additional charges are to be laid.

When we objectively look at this, we can say that Canadians support it. I know that in my riding, when we did a survey, we had over 75% of the constituents, and in fact in Ontario, supporting a national firearms registry for safe communities, for safe streets and to protect Canadians.

The national firearms registry has nothing to do with some grandiose plans to somehow run away with everyone's guns. All I know is that we have a national firearms registry that is consulted at least 5,000 times each and every day by front line policing officers.

I know that gun owners can continue to collect firearms today. I know that target shooters and sports shooters can continue their hobby. I also know that collectors can continue to collect and to hunt. Nothing has changed. The cost of registration for individuals was not an enormous amount of money; it was a reasonable amount.

Probably the most important feature of this national registry is in terms of its operating costs. Costs are now being limited to a maximum of \$20 million a year. It has been demonstrated to Canadians that there are rules to the game and responsibilities of owning a firearm. People have now properly registered their guns and been properly trained. Gun owners properly store their guns and their ammunition, and use it appropriately in terms of transportation and use.

Having said that, it is very clear that Canadians now are familiar that gun owners who are registered owners are really the responsible ones and Canadians as a whole feel more comfortable knowing that firearms are being used more responsibly. That is the benefit of the national firearms registry system. That is why this government supported it back then and that is why we support it still today.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The member will have time for questions and comments after question period.

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STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

LONDON POLICE SERVICE

Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak about an important part of my city of London's history.

This year marks the London Police Service 150th anniversary. Among the Service's greatest achievements was its expansion and its modernization. This is because of a growing population and also because we all know that the technological and scientific advancements have factored into our modern day police work. The Service actively took up these challenges and has evolved today to be a very distinguished organization that we are all proud of.

Londoners of 1855 probably could not have imagined the work that is being done now and what the future had in store for their police service. The changes may have seemed incomprehensible and non-recognizable but not everything would be different.

Today, 150 years later, constables still march their beats, following in symbolic paths of their predecessors, both men and women, who have met the challenges through the generations.

We congratulate them and we thank them.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, over the past four years, farmers in my constituency have experienced two droughts, one devastating frost and now a flood.

Extraordinary levels of rainfall this past September have basically wiped out another crop for farmers in my riding. The CAIS program and other federal farm programs provide absolutely no relief.

Historically low commodity prices, a rising Canadian dollar, record high fuel prices and BSE have simply created a perfect storm for our agricultural producers.

Farmers have nowhere to turn. They can only hope that the Liberal-NDP coalition government will come to their assistance. The Liberal-NDP coalition government must take immediate and effective action to help our farmers.

If the Liberal-NDP coalition continues to ignore the problems of Canadian farmers there is only one choice. We will need an immediate federal election that will bring to power a new Conservative government that is committed to standing up for Canadian farmers.

* * *

PHILIPPINE HERITAGE BAND

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this weekend I had the great pleasure of attending the 25th anniversary celebration for the award winning Philippine Heritage Band.

In offering a unique blend of English and Filipino music, this world-class marching and concert band adds vibrancy and energy to countless events in Thornhill, Vaughan, Ontario and internationally. I

congratulate it heartily on its outstanding efforts which have won it best band and community leadership awards.

I applaud the band's distinct and consistent determination to have youth and adults working together for the betterment of the community and itself.

The band exemplifies the very best of Canada in terms of talent, volunteerism and strengthening the multicultural fabric of our country.

I wish the band great continued success in the next 25 years.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BERNARD VOYER

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, "We need only to surpass ourselves." That phrase summarizes in a nutshell the philosophy of Bernard Voyer, who was given an honorary doctorate by the Université du Québec à Rimouski last Saturday, October 22.

This recognition, following on so many others such as the National Order of Quebec, the Order of Canada, the Royal Canadian Geographical Society gold medal, and being listed as one of the 50 greatest Canadians, clearly reflects how proud the university and the people of all of eastern Quebec are of Mr. Voyer.

Mr. Voyer, that model of determination and commitment, does indeed surpass himself continually, although benefiting from the presence of the companions in his adventures. When faced with what seems to be an insurmountable obstacle, his reaction: "I will find the energy I need in the challenge itself and in my desire to succeed".

All of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois join with me in congratulating Mr. Voyer on his achievements and thank him for his example to us all, both young and old.

* * *

[*English*]

DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Hon. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Oshawa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, grade 5 students from across the Durham District School Board were invited to submit a 500-word essay on what it would be like to be a police officer.

After reviewing hundreds of essays, the Durham District School Board brought forward five finalists. These finalists came to the Durham Regional Police Headquarters on September 29 and read their essays in front of a community panel.

Ten year-old Vanessa Foran, a grade 5 student at Florence M. Heart Public School in Whitby, was chosen the overall winner.

After swearing her oath of office on October 17, Vanessa Foran took up her new duties as chief of police for the day. Wearing her personally tailored chief's uniform, "Chief Foran" visited several units to learn more about policing. Vanessa's special day also included a helicopter ride on Air 1.

I ask all members to please join me in congratulating Vanessa Foran, a spirited young woman who has shown what one can accomplish if one is prepared to just give it a try.

* * *

● (1405)

GORDON RUSSELL

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for over 50 years, Gordon Russell and his wife Frances have helped to create positive outcomes through athletics for many of Edmonton's troubled youth and they founded the Gordon Russell Crystal Kids Youth Centre.

Gordon, member of the Order of Canada and Native Counselling Services of Alberta, Citizen of the Year and inductee into Edmonton's Sports Hall of Fame, is also on the honour roll of the City of Edmonton's Boxing and Wrestling Commission.

Gordon passed away very recently at the age of 79.

At his funeral, young and old, from all walks of life, paid tribute to this person who left this world a much better place. A boxing ring bell rang 10 times; the boxing legend was finally down for the count.

Gordon Russell played his life as he played sports: a humble man with courage, dedication and fair play.

Gordon Russell, truly a humble hero, will be missed.

* * *

ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mike Wilson, president of Atlantic Industries Limited in Dorchester, New Brunswick.

On October 6, the Minister of ACOA presented Mr. Wilson with the 2005 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award for Atlantic Canada.

With more than eight plants in Atlantic Canada and sales offices and distribution centres all across North America, Atlantic Industries provides high quality service and innovative solutions in the field of steel structures.

I have personally visited Atlantic Industries and I have seen its impressive workforce, leading edge technologies and outstanding products.

Mike Wilson comes from a distinguished family of entrepreneurs and community leaders. He is not only an outstanding business person, but also a dedicated and generous benefactor to numerous good causes.

[Translation]

If there were more Mike Wilsons, the rural areas of New Brunswick would be better off.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I thank him and Atlantic Industries for their contribution.

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CHATELAINE MAGAZINE

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, back in 1960, Chatelaine magazine began, with articles encouraging women to develop their full potential.

The magazine is turning 45 this year. To mark this event, it has decided to devote a 300-page October issue to the theme of happiness.

No hearts and flowers here. They are looking at happiness from a scientific point of view and the analysis of a professional survey. Women from age 10 to 100 are included, women who are in good health and women who are not. In short, it is an examination of the living conditions of women both here and elsewhere.

The Bloc Québécois salutes Chatelaine for the aptness and usefulness of its articles. Women readers are not the only ones to benefit, society as a whole, does as well. The anniversary issue is a great read.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 50 years a Canadian has been nominated as president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. I am pleased to congratulate Janet Davidson on this achievement.

Ms. Davidson's experience is exceptional. She is the chief operating officer of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, the largest regional health authority in Canada. Her achievements include serving as president of the Canadian Red Cross, as vice-president for the Americas and as vice-chair of the standing commission, the highest level of governance in Red Cross/Red Crescent.

Janet Davidson superbly exemplifies the qualities of dedication, compassion, ability and the internationalism that Canadians so highly prize.

Her nomination is an honour for Canada. We wish her the best in her quest to become the president of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

* * *

● (1410)

CAMBRIDGE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to pay tribute to the Cambridge Memorial Hospital and a small group of elected officials who are fighting to get justice for this hospital and all its hard-working, dedicated staff.

Despite the fact that the hospital is a prime example of an efficient public health care facility, the provincial Liberal government has reneged on a promised \$70 million of funding. This is a disaster for the entire Waterloo region. Many people are upset about the political games being played by Liberals with this issue.

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This issue is about saving lives and improving the health care of thousands of people. It is not about political posturing and vote buying.

I urge members to join with me and encourage everybody to leave this issue to the elected people on the task force and to stop trying to score points at the expense of lives in Cambridge.

* * *

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a fine British Columbian who joins us today in Ottawa.

Sindi Hawkins is the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia and is the MLA for Kelowna-Mission. She has also served British Columbians as minister of state for intergovernmental relations and as minister of health planning.

I hope Ms. Hawkins enjoys her trip to our nation's capital.

* * *

BURMA

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today marks a total of 10 years that Nobel Laureate, human rights activist and political leader Aung San Suu Kyi has endured house arrest in Burma and signals a renewed campaign to end the oppression and brutality.

Canadians are outraged that our money is helping to prop up the brutal Burmese regime. Despite our official government position against doing business in Burma, our CPP Investment Board still pours millions of dollars of our savings into Burma, just as it knowingly invests our money in tobacco deaths and the arms trade.

What must it feel like for Canadians from Burma to know that their money is buying the guns used to kill family and friends back home?

The CPP's new investment policy still only looks at the bottom line. There is no question of divestment unless profits plunge.

Canada has lost its way. There are plenty of profitable, ethical, green and human rights friendly investments to be made at home and abroad.

When will the Liberal government signal that not all Canadians have sold their ethics for profits and that our values should determine where our dollars are invested?

* * *

BURMA

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1990, in the general elections in Burma, the leader of the national league for democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi, led her party to a landslide victory. The military junta refused to acknowledge the will of the people. She was arrested. A year later, while in prison, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She has been in and out of prison and today her supporters commemorate 10 years of her house arrest where she is presently under guard today.

A report to the United Nations this September by former Czech President Václav Havel and Archbishop Desmond Tutu has urged the Security Council to take action in Burma.

Now is the opportunity for the Canadian government to act. Two things can be done: First, the government should pursue a policy of disinvestment in the cruel regime in Burma; and second, the government must acknowledge the all party resolution of the foreign affairs committee on Burma and call upon the Security Council to overcome opposition from China and vote to deal with the Burma issue at the highest level.

Let us set Aung San Suu Kyi free and give democracy a chance in Burma. When will the government act?

* * *

[*Translation*]

GRAND COUNCIL OF THE CREES

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Matthew Mukash on his recent election as Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees. On October 18, I had the honour of participating in the swearing-in ceremony of the new grand chief and his deputy grand chief in Chisasibi, which is located in my riding.

In addition, I want to thank outgoing Grand Chief Ted Moses for his work and determination, and for the momentum he gave to the negotiations leading to the peace of the braves agreement. His involvement in advancing several other issues was also greatly appreciated.

In closing, I wish wholeheartedly that the good relationship between Quebec and the Cree Nation will continue under the leadership of the new grand chief.

I wish Mr. Mukash, new Deputy Grand Chief Ashley Iserhoff and all newly elected chiefs a good term of office.

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ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past two years, the Liberal government has been spending heavily on the department responsible for aboriginal affairs.

What good did that do? Aboriginal Canadians continue to endure the same problems: safe drinking water is not ensured, the residential school issue has yet to be settled, and the supply of housing remains clearly insufficient.

The Liberal government promised to act on these issues. Two years and billions of dollars later, nothing has changed.

Canadians are paying for these inefficient programs. They should know where this money is going. More importantly, aboriginal Canadians deserve better.

Oral Questions

●(1415)

UNITED NATIONS CHARTER

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 60 years ago today, when the world was picking up the pieces after the war, the United Nations Charter was ratified and the cornerstone of the modern-day bilateral system was implemented. The Charter begins with the famous preamble, “We the Peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”.

Today the United Nations is faced with the complex challenge of a changing world. Canada is working relentlessly in helping to reform the United Nations.

The 2005 Summit marks a forward step in that a need was recognized for a peacebuilding commission, for a response to health challenges and for ways to address the root causes of poverty, ignorance and fear. It is worth noting that it fully supports the responsibility to protect individuals from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

I remind hon. members that in March 2004, Secretary General Kofi Annan said in the House of Commons, “It is hard to imagine the United Nations without Canada and, I might even say, it has become hard to imagine Canada without the United Nations”.

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ASIAN BICYCLE IMPORTS

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is now more than six weeks since the Canadian International Trade Tribunal recommended imposing 20% to 30% duties on Asian bicycle imports in order to protect local manufacturers of similar products. Yet, the government still has not made a decision.

On Saturday, some 250 workers from the Raleigh bicycle factory in Waterloo called on the federal government to take action in this matter. The government, unmoved, continues to turn a deaf ear.

Even the Minister of Transport and former member for Shefford has shown a lack of interest in the plight of the 1,500 workers in Quebec in danger of losing their jobs. When asked to comment, he wondered about the relevance of these jobs to the Canadian economy. Where is the man who boasts that he is attuned to the people of Waterloo?

How many plants like Roxton Furniture have to disappear because of Asian competition before the federal Liberal government takes action and protects the economy of Montréal?

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Transport labelled Mr. Pelletier a Parti Québécois sympathizer for defending Quebec's jurisdiction. Today, we hear that the Minister of Foreign Affairs says he too is

bothered by the federal cabinet's interference in areas that fall under provincial jurisdiction.

Can the Prime Minister tell us which one of these two ministers is speaking on behalf of his government?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they both do. They both state very clearly that the Government of Canada continues to work with its partners in the federation, respecting the jurisdictions of each.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister has admitted that, even in cabinet discussions, the government does not respect provincial jurisdictions.

[English]

I would like to bring up another matter. Since NAFTA's extraordinary challenge ruling, the government has continued to provide no direction to the industry. First, the trade minister wanted to negotiate away our victory, then he changed his mind. Now we are hearing more mixed messages from the Prime Minister, softening his previous position on no negotiations.

Does the Prime Minister understand that mixed messages only encourage American aggressiveness and weaken the Canadian position?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been very clear on the issue of softwood lumber. The bottom line is very simple. The NAFTA must be respected. That is, has been and will be our position.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's position until today was that we would not negotiate after we had won. This is the same position we have taken. Now he saying that he is looking for some kind of a sign from the United States.

Does the minister have any idea what this sign will be? Is it a nudge? Is it a wink? Precisely what kind of sign is the government looking for?

●(1420)

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as far as the current lumber dispute is concerned, we have always taken the position that the NAFTA has to be respected. The ECC has spoken as the court of final appeal. We have won. We want the deposits returned.

We also have said that we want a long term durable solution to this dispute, which has been going on since 1982, and that we would be prepared to look at ways in the future that would get long term stability for our workers, our communities and our industry.

Mr. Ted Menzies (MacLeod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 72 days, Liberals have sent conflicting messages on softwood. The ministers of Industry, International Trade and Foreign Affairs have said no to further negotiations. This morning the Prime Minister flip-flopped in favour of negotiations.

Oral Questions

With the U.S. Secretary of State in Ottawa, is the Prime Minister even in a position to demand a resolution today or has he mismanaged this file so badly the Americans do not even know what we want?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat very simply that we have always said that we would favour a long term durable resolution to this issue and that we would be prepared at some point to sit down and negotiate this. The one thing that is not negotiable is the NAFTA. It must be respected.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that rings pretty hollow. The Prime Minister clearly has flip-flopped on his softwood position, from hollow threats to the silent treatment and now the moving target approach.

How can the Prime Minister expect Americans to take his position seriously when he does not take it seriously himself?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has said that the Prime Minister does not take this issue seriously. In every meeting that he has had with his American counterpart, the President, he has raised the softwood issue. In all the meetings my colleagues and I have had with our U.S. counterparts, we have raised the issue. I can assure the House that it will be raised with the Secretary of State during her visit.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister has just finished telling us that the NAFTA panel ruling on softwood lumber is not negotiable, but at the same time that a long term agreement on this issue should be negotiated.

Could he tell this House what kind of agreement he has in mind, and whether it would differ from the ruling obtained under NAFTA?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if an agreement on softwood lumber were reached, this agreement would be in the best interest of Canadians.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was not expecting the minister to tell us that he would try and negotiate an agreement that would be very bad for Canadians. Let us be serious here.

Since he told us that the NAFTA ruling has to be respected and since he mentioned a long term agreement, could the minister specify whether this agreement will essentially be based on the ruling obtained under NAFTA? That is the question.

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. First, NAFTA has to be respected. Second, we are looking for a solution, one that will be long term and durable, to resolve this dispute.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ms. Rice's visit to Canada is an exceptional opportunity for the government to show just how determined it is in the softwood lumber issue. Forestry companies, as you know, have now paid out up to \$5 billion in unjustified countervailing duties and are right in asking the federal government to grant them loan guarantees.

Will the government admit that refusing to grant these loan guarantees to the forestry companies is one way of refusing to make it really clear to the Americans that not only is the government

talking tough, but it has also decided to take tough action in this matter?

● (1425)

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry has already announced that he was taking care of this matter and the issues concerning support for the communities, the industry and the workers. He will be making an announcement in the near future.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec said in this House that we must be careful with loan guarantees because such a measure might "confirm the Americans in their position of imposing duties". Yet, loan guarantees are authorized under the WTO and NAFTA.

Why does the government continue to refuse to grant these loan guarantees when they would make its position so much more credible to the U.S. government during Ms. Rice's visit?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the hon. member is right. We must always be very careful with our spending and so we will be.

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[*English*]

HEALTH

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Health said that privatization of the health care system was not a problem. I guess he knows this because the government last checked in 1998, seven years ago.

Since then, Ralph Klein has opened private hospitals. We have had Gordon Campbell opening and experimenting with private clinics. We have had Premier Hamm spreading private MRIs in Nova Scotia. Privatization is growing everywhere. Then this morning the Prime Minister said that he agreed with the health minister.

Is it the position of the government now that private hospitals are simply nothing to worry about?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a more recent report was just issued by CIHI this year. It indicates there has been no increase in private spending on health care in the country in terms of the percentage.

Last weekend all the ministers of health from across the country agreed to ensure that we would meet the commitments established for us by all the first ministers across the country in September 2004, and we will. We will have benchmarks by the end of this year in all the priority areas as asked for by the first ministers.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that party in government today ran in the year 2000 against Ralph Klein's private hospitals. It said that it was the fight of its life. It laid its reputation in front of Canadians on stopping private health care and private hospitals. Yet five years later we have the health minister and this Prime Minister apparently now welcoming and accepting these private hospitals in Canada.

When will the government live up to its commitment to Canadians and stop the growth of private health care here?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we have delivered on our commitment to strengthen public health care in this country with \$41 billion, with an agreement by all of the first ministers, and with an agreement with all of the health ministers just this weekend.

The member who just spoke should be concerned about the opposition, which wants to gut the Canada Health Act and actually end the federal role in health care, like Preston Manning and Mike Harris. When people talk like a Tory and walk like a Tory, they are Tories. That is what those members want to do.

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SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Except, Mr. Speaker, that as a Liberal he has taken the same position we have on the health care issue.

I am trying to discern the government's position on the softwood lumber dispute. Up until today, its position was that there would be no negotiations. I listened to the minister's answers to the Bloc. He said he was seeking a good deal for Canada, a negotiated settlement. Which is it? No negotiations or a negotiated settlement?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be very simple so the minister understands, so the member understands—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the minister appreciates all the applause his answer has caused so far, but we have to be able to hear the answer. The minister will now want to resume with some order in the House.

• (1430)

Hon. Jim Peterson: Mr. Speaker, I really slipped on that one.

Having said that, the answer is very simple. We are seeking a long term durable resolution to bring stability to our workers, our communities and our industry. At the same time, we are saying that NAFTA must be respected. The ECC has spoken. We want these rulings to be implemented.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister can say he is keeping his answers simple for himself, but they are getting increasingly convoluted.

The government has proclaimed to Canadians that there will be no negotiations after we win. Now the minister is getting up and laying down what a negotiated settlement would look like. The secretary of state of the United States is here today. Is the position to be no

negotiations or we are looking for a negotiated settlement? Which is it?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): It is a very simple answer, Mr. Speaker. NAFTA must be respected. The NAFTA appeal court, the ECC, has spoken. We want those rulings to be implemented.

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HEALTH

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said this past June that his government had “brought in all of the scientific evidence, all of the medical experts, in order to establish very clear benchmarks by the end of this year”.

The Prime Minister called this process urgent, and I agree, but obviously the Prime Minister and his health minister no longer share this sense of urgency.

If the government had all the evidence this past summer, why is the minister now backpedalling on his benchmark promises?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that 13 ministers of health gathered in Toronto for the last two days and reaffirmed in a very robust fashion the commitment of the first ministers to the health care accord of 2004, which means that we will have benchmarks in all five areas by December 31, 2005. That is within two months.

I want to tell the hon. member, the fact is that your party wants to gut the Canada Health Act, wants to privatize health care and wants to end the federal role in health care. Now you are telling me that we are not—

The Speaker: The minister of course will want to address his remarks to the Chair and not suggest that the Speaker's party is involved in anything. The hon. member for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia.

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister would be well advised to remember that it is his leader who uses private clinics.

The Prime Minister said in June, “We've set out very, very clear timelines in which these benchmarks are going to be established. We insist that those timelines be adhered to”.

The Prime Minister and the premiers agreed to have meaningful benchmarks in place by the year's end in five key areas. Now the provinces are saying that not all the benchmarks will be in place by the deadline.

Will the Prime Minister admit that under a Liberal government Canadians will have to wait a very, very long time for medically necessary—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we will have benchmarks in all of the five key areas agreed upon by first ministers by December 31.

Oral Questions

The fact also is that Preston Manning and Mike Harris want to end the federal role in health care. The fact is that the current Leader of the Opposition also wants to end the federal role in health care.

I want to know what those members' position is on our role. We are playing a federal role, a very strong federal role, which they want to end.

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[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade tells us that the NAFTA ruling must be implemented, must be applied. Yet he also tells us that we need to negotiate subsequent to that ruling. It would be most surprising if Canada were to demand more from the Americans than what is in the ruling, it seems to me. So it would appear that negotiations would be to ask for less than what is offered in the ruling.

Could the minister clarify his position on this reasoning?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we have always said, there are two issues. There is the matter of the deposits collected and until now retained by the United States. At the present time, according to the NAFTA ruling, these belong to us.

The second matter is to find a sustainable and long term solution for this situation. We will be prepared to discuss that later on, but for the moment the main point is that NAFTA needs to be respected.

•(1435)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a sustainable and long term solution can be nothing other than the NAFTA rulings. If there is anything else, let the minister say so.

I would like to understand. He tells us that it can be nothing other than applying NAFTA, yet he wants to hold discussions with a view to possibly finding something else.

Does he realize that he will get nothing more than the ruling and that starting to negotiate instead of demanding implementation of the ruling will put him in a position of asking for less than what is there now? Can he follow my reasoning?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will of course do our utmost to see that NAFTA is complied with, in other words, that all deposits are returned.

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HOUSING

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec and Canada, 1.7 million households are struggling for decent housing. There are 150,000 homeless people currently living on the street. Meanwhile, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation board of directors is travelling across the country and spending left and right.

Could the Minister of Labour and Housing tell us if, during these pretty boozy meetings, the CMHC directors are making any

decisions with respect to how their \$4 billion surplus ought to be used to help people living in substandard housing?

[English]

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question and concern with regard to housing, and first let me deal with the question. CMHC, as with all crown corporations, must act with care and frugality, and while there are rules and regulations in place and even guidelines to abide by, the board needs to be mindful of the higher standard that we all are put to by the Canadian public.

If the question also was whether the board does some very good work on behalf of Canadians in travelling across the country and listening to stakeholders with the view of improving housing conditions across Canada, the answer is of course.

[Translation]

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during these cozy CMHC meetings, golf games, cruises or helicopter rides, do the directors talk about the renewal of the SCPI program to help the 150,000 homeless people currently living on the street? That is what is really scandalous.

[English]

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only is the board of directors of CMHC a very talented group of people who in fact are very experienced in housing, they are working toward finding housing solutions not only in the marketplace but including social housing in Quebec and throughout. As members know, it was the Bloc that voted against Bill C-48, which would put in \$1.6 billion, including in Quebec, to renew IPAC, to do more RRAP, and to build more social housing in Quebec and throughout the country.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend three young people were brutally murdered in the Toronto area. The citizens of the city are feeling increasingly fearful and helpless. In one incident, a drive-by shooting, stray bullets flew. We are lucky that this time innocent bystanders escaped injury or death.

According to one resident, "this place is like a shooting gallery". He is right. This weekend's gunfire brings Toronto's murder toll for the year to 64. Forty-four of those deaths were from gun crime, a record number. Toronto is on pace for a 400% increase in gun deaths since 1998.

Why has this government done nothing for years as violent crime grew out of control?

Oral Questions

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have engaged in a number of initiatives. We now have a tripartite package of reforms which will be introduced. The first will be amendments to the Criminal Code, the second by way of law enforcement, and the third by way of community and educational and economic initiatives.

• (1440)

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the government's legislation. Police tell us that much of this violent crime in Toronto is related to a growing drug culture, yet this government is still advancing legislation to decriminalize the use and some production of marijuana. A Liberal senator has even called for legalization of hard drugs.

Is it any wonder that criminal activity is rising when this Liberal government tells young Canadians that drug use is okay? Parents already have enough challenges trying to raise children without this government telling their youngsters that drug use is all right. Will the minister commit to withdrawing his reckless and dangerous plan to decriminalize the drug use that is fuelling the escalation in violent crime today?

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member is mischaracterizing the legislation, which clearly states that drug use remains illegal even under the decriminalization and which was the unanimous recommendation of members of a parliamentary committee, including members of the party opposite.

We have also put this issue on the subject matter for the meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers of justice.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Frank Brazeau, the secretary of a local Liberal association and a public servant, used his influence to secure \$1 million in contracts for the Liberal member of Parliament for Pontiac. The KPMG auditing firm has found irregularities in contracts totalling \$15 million also given by Mr. Brazeau.

Will the Prime Minister release KPMG's report now? Otherwise, what is he trying to hide?

[English]

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, this matter is now before the Ethics Commissioner, as members well know. The member for Pontiac has committed to making the results of whatever the commissioner says public. I would hope that members opposite would wait for a response from the Ethics Commissioner before commenting further.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is more stonewalling.

A Liberal riding secretary used his influence to direct almost \$1 million in contracts to a Liberal member of Parliament. Both men are

close friends and ardent loyalists of the current Prime Minister and both have been lavishly rewarded for it. A KPMG report found that more than \$15 million saw irregularities in the way it was handed out in the form of contracts.

Why will the Prime Minister not immediately release this KPMG audit so that taxpayers can know just how much he has been rewarding his Liberal friends?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the review—and it is not an audit, it is a review—was commissioned by the department as part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen competition and to increase accountability.

The fact is that these contracts with the company were cancelled as a result of this review, but it is important to recognize that in all cases services were received for taxpayers' dollars and that in fact there were valuable services provided by the company. Furthermore, there has been disciplinary action taken against this employee.

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[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

This weekend, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, who, in the opinion of an esteemed political pundit, is also a pro at putting a wrench in the works, harped on the need for a partnership between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Can the minister refresh the memory of the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie on the partnership that has united not only Quebec, but also the entire country for nearly 140 years, that is the Canadian confederation?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc is still trying to dupe Quebecers and spread confusion, while his head office in Quebec City is itself more clear. It is no longer a proponent of any type of partnership.

The leader of the Bloc wants us to believe that separation would be painless. Unless after 15 years in Ottawa he has seen the merits of a real partnership called Canadian federalism.

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[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that across this country we find workers who have been out of work in the softwood industry for months. We have whole communities that are virtually shut down, yet all we get from the government is words, statements, silence, absolutely no action whatsoever.

Oral Questions

Is the government finally willing to consider the NDP's suggestion that we should look at the possibility of export charges on our oil and gas so that the U.S. administration will know that we are serious?

• (1445)

Hon. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no question that this government takes all actions that happen in this country very seriously. Softwood lumber is a critical issue for communities, for people who work in the industry and for the industry itself.

The Prime Minister has made it extremely clear that nothing short of a settlement that has been awarded will be settled for. There is no question about that.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the American administration is playing hardball with Canada. There is no spine on the government benches when it comes to standing up for Canadian workers and communities.

When are we going to use the tools that are available to us, the kinds of tools that the American administration is using against us? It is holding \$5 billion of our money in its bank accounts and we are doing nothing to recover it, including even considering the possibility of recovery.

When will the government take some action and look at the possibility of export charges?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I am aware that the official opposition did not ask the last question, but the Deputy Prime Minister has risen to answer it. Everyone is going to want to hear the answer.

The Deputy Prime Minister has the floor.

Hon. Anne McLellan: Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely clear here. There should be no misunderstanding that the \$3.5 billion that has been finally adjudicated, we have been clear we will settle for nothing less than the \$3.5 billion back. When the \$1.5 billion is finally adjudicated, we anticipate that we will win that adjudication once and for all and we will get that \$1.5 billion back.

The Prime Minister has been absolutely clear—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year's Deloitte & Touche audit of Canada Post revealed that Andre Ouellette had paid himself enormous sums of money as pork-master general and he did not even bother to provide receipts. David Dingwall may be the prince of pork, but André Ouellet is still the king.

The government promised a complete audit of the office of André Ouellet more than a year ago. It begs the question, what is the government hiding here? If the Liberal government can come up with a whitewashed Dingwall audit in three weeks, why does it need more than a year for the André Ouellet audit?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the subject of audits, I understand that the hon. member is carrying out his own audit of Mr. Dingwall, so there are now three.

We have two other audits going on. We have the Auditor General who wrote four months ago that the systems and practices of the Mint are designed and operated in a fashion which provide reasonable assurances that assets are safeguarded and controlled. We have a third auditor, PricewaterhouseCoopers, which will be reporting.

So I ask, who is more credible, the Auditor General, PricewaterhouseCoopers, or that gentleman over there?

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is too bad the revenue minister cannot impersonate the revenue minister as well as our leader can.

The revenue minister is responsible for overseeing a tax system that should apply to all Canadians equally, but no other Canadian, not one, would get away with what André Ouellet has gotten away with. Government documents reveal that the revenue minister has known for over four months that André Ouellet will not provide receipts. He has done absolutely nothing about it. It is shameful. I want to ask him one question. Why?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the statements of the hon. member are false, but since he mentioned the Leader of the Opposition, let me just suggest that in view of his performance on Saturday, when eventually he steps down from his present position, perhaps in a decade or two, and when he speaks to his young grandchildren 20 years hence as to his greatest achievement in politics, my guess is he will say, "My greatest achievement was imitating John McCallum in question period".

• (1450)

The Speaker: I think the minister meant, of course, the Minister of National Revenue.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

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CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, throughout this Parliament we have seen a steady parade of shocking abuses of taxpayers' money. Today there is another scandal. Managers of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation have held lavish receptions, racked up exorbitant travel and dining expenses, and taken boat cruises, all paid for by the Canadian taxpayer.

CMHC is supposed to provide affordable housing for low income Canadians, not lavish entertainment for its own managers. When will the government stop helping itself to taxpayers' money and start helping Canadians in need?

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I addressed this question earlier.

Oral Questions

I appreciate the concern of the member. All crowns need to make sure that they act with care and frugality. Even though there are rules, regulations and guidelines provided to all board members of all crown corporations, including CMHC, I indicate to all of them that we have a higher standard to abide by, and that is the standard of the public and the Canadian taxpayer. We have made that known to them.

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Here we go again, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Liberal mismanagement now extends to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: lavish receptions, expensive meals and even boat cruises, and all at the taxpayers' expense. In Canada, two million families cannot find decent housing. This government continues to put its own interests ahead of those of needy families.

How does the Prime Minister explain these extravagant expenses this time?

[*English*]

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has a very comprehensive housing policy, unlike that party. Since 1999 we have put \$1 billion toward our homelessness initiative which we will renew, \$2 billion in commitments made to affordable housing across the country, and an additional \$1.6 billion with regard to new initiatives on affordable housing and social housing.

CMHC is doing the work of this government. That is to make sure that we listen to people, provide housing and move, unlike that party that has no—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday more than 1,000 farmers and their supporters, a number of Bloc Québécois members among them, held a demonstration in Montreal. This was an initiative by the GO5 coalition, aimed at getting the federal government to take a firm position in favour of supply management mere weeks away from the WTO meeting in Hong Kong.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food state categorically that the supply management system is non-negotiable as far as Canada is concerned, and that no concessions whatsoever will be made during the WTO negotiations, as called for by the House with its unanimous passage of Motion M-163 on April 15?

[*English*]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are actively engaged in the WTO negotiations where we want to see the elimination of export subsidies, the reduction of divested support and increased market access to our Canadian producers. We have made it crystal clear that the decision on how individual producers in Canada wish to market their products domestically is a choice for Canadian

producers. That is one that they have and one which they will continue to have.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since he has all the leeway required for preserving supply management available to him under the July 2004 framework agreement on sensitive products, can the minister guarantee us that, should there be a definitive agreement, his chief negotiator is mandated to see that it includes milk, eggs and poultry among those sensitive products, thereby providing them with protection?

[*English*]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been at the forefront in these negotiations. We have insisted that there be a sensitive products category as part of any agreement and that in seeking an aggressive tariff reduction formula that in fact sensitive products have to be identified, that those sensitive products need to be treated differently and that individual nations have to have the flexibility in order to deal with them. All of this is being done in conjunction with close consultation with our supply managed industries which very much support the government in wanting to have sensitive products as part of this agreement.

* * *

● (1455)

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the report to the Security Council on the bombing murder of the former president of Lebanon, Rafik Hariri, has now been released. Our suspicions have been confirmed. Clearly the dictators in Damascus are implicated. Syria has tried to rule Lebanon for decades and now that it has been forced to withdraw, it is still trying to diminish the hopes of the Lebanese people.

Has the foreign affairs minister called in the ambassador from Syria and what exactly did he say to him following this report being released?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we take that report very seriously. The hon. member is absolutely right that we have to make sure that the Security Council is totally seized of the content of this report. Syria has serious answers to give to the international system. It is imperative that Syria provide some answers.

When I was there in February, I met with the Syrian leadership. At that time I said that that country had to withdraw from Lebanon. It is absolutely unacceptable that that country would try to continue to have any say in the future of Lebanon, which is now making its own destiny and future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations investigative report has clearly indicated that the Syrian regime was involved in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister El Hariri. Yet the minister has neither met with the ambassador nor spoken to him.

Oral Questions

Why is this? And will he indicate the retaliatory measures he will be recommending to the government?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government takes very seriously the investigative report into the possibility of Syrian involvement in the assassination of Mr. El Hariri in Lebanon. This is a matter of great concern to us. We hope that the Security Council will immediately examine this report, which we take most seriously.

It is obvious that Syria must answer for its actions and there is no doubt that it must respond to the accusations made public in this report. Canada will be following this situation very closely.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

The media have reported that the federal government is delaying the implementation of the Eastmain-Rupert project. What is the federal government's involvement and what are the recent developments in this project?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two review boards for this issue: one is federal and the other is provincial. Their work is progressing quite well. In the coming months, we can certainly achieve excellent results. We want to see these results both for the environment and for the economy because this project might help us a great deal in meeting our Kyoto objectives.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the materiel management software project, MASIS, is a sinkhole with no end in sight. Costs have ballooned by over 100% and who knows what the costs will be by the time it is complete, if ever. According to the department, this project is supposed to save money, yet the costs are increasing at such a rate it is doubtful that any savings will be achieved. With no end in sight, the government is afraid to cut its losses.

Is the government embarrassed to tell Canadians that it has wasted and mismanaged their money yet again?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the MASIS system is designed to save a considerable amount of money in terms of our procurement. When it is fully implemented it is going to save us about 10% on our procurement budget, which is a substantial amount of money as we go forward acquiring important assets for our forces.

The system is being implemented. It is a system that is being implemented by the United States, Germany and other allies of ours. Like all IT projects, it is going through some learning pains, but it will be implemented and it will create great savings for the Canadian taxpayer when we make our procurement purchases.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is like Orwell: increased costs are savings.

The materiel management project, MASIS, is not the only software project that the government has mismanaged. The Canadian Forces supply system upgrade project overrun by hundreds of millions of dollars, but who answered for that? The Canadian taxpayers.

Another example is the mismanagement of the current omnibus command and control project which could cost up to \$10 billion. It already has come under fire by the Auditor General. Is this another sinkhole?

How can we trust the government to implement projects on time and on budget when it has such a shameful history of mismanagement and waste?

• (1500)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can only assume that the hon. member knows more about *Animal Farm*, by virtue of his experience on the opposite side, than members on this side of the House would know. An Orwellian experience is a literary reference which is not particularly helpful in these circumstances.

What we are doing is searching for intelligent solutions, future solutions to our problems through applying the best technology we can get. Of course, there are problems implementing it, but we will work our way through this system and it will produce results for the department and for the Canadian taxpayer.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, speaking before young Liberals in Trois-Rivières, the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated, "I understand that some might be annoyed by what is perceived as encroachments on provincial jurisdictions. I have to admit that, from time to time, while sitting at the cabinet table, I get the impression that I am at a provincial cabinet meeting. I too find it annoying".

My question is for the minister responsible for federal-provincial relations. When one of her fellow ministers says that he gets the impression that he is sitting on a provincial cabinet and that he finds it annoying, does she not realize that that is what federal encroachment on provincial jurisdictions is all about?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it really fascinating to have the Bloc Québécois wanting to discuss various visions of federalism and how they are implemented across Canada. This is clearly the result of 15 years of political life in Ottawa. That is wonderful. I greatly appreciate hearing the Bloc's position on Canadian federalism. We can see that Bloc members just love working here.

I assure the House that we will continue to work with our partners in the federation, that is, the provinces.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

PRIVILEGE**HEALTH**

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I and many other Canadians are deeply concerned with the rising levels of obesity, particularly among Canadian children.

We have seen illnesses that were previously rare in children, like type 2 diabetes and hypertension, now become prevalent. In fact, for the first time in generations, we see that the life expectancy for Canadian children is being jeopardized and is going down.

My question is for the Minister of State for Public Health. What is the government doing at this time to address this very important issue?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of State (Public Health), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is deeply concerned too.

The OMA report last week showed that this may be the first generation of children that do not live as long as their parents.

With the \$300 million that we released last week, we are working with our provincial and territorial colleagues, with all stakeholders, with the food industry and with everyone we possibly can to help instill healthy choices being the easy choices, physical activity and better eating, to get healthy weights for all Canadians.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Tony Abbott, Minister for Health and Ageing and Leader of the House of Representatives for the Parliament of Australia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I also draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Ms. Janet Davidson, the first Canadian proposed to be President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I also draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Mr. Sein Win, MP-elect of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

● (1505)

PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of a Canadian parliamentary delegation concerning its visit to New Zealand and Australia from August 1 to August 12.

NON-MEDICAL USE OF DRUGS

Mr. Randy White (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. The Minister of Justice keeps referring to the fact that the Conservative Party agreed with all the recommendations in the report from the special committee established in the House to study the non-medical use of drugs, in particular, marijuana.

I and my colleague from Crowfoot wrote a minority report on that report and we dealt with the issue of marijuana in that report. I did not and have not agreed that the criminalization of marijuana would be satisfactory to our country. However, I said in the report that for it to be successful there would have to be a number of conditions in place before I could even consider it.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: That is debate.

Mr. Randy White: It is not debate, Mr. Speaker. I am laying the grounds for the erroneous statements made by the Minister of Justice. I do not agree with the decriminalization of marijuana and would not have agreed in the minority report.

I would ask the minister to refrain from making those statements as they reflect poorly on my judgment more so than his.

The Speaker: The hon. member has made a point but really it is a debate. I do not think there is a question of privilege in what he has said, not that I could hear even with all the groundwork.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to table today four certificates of nomination pursuant to Standing Order 110.2. These will be referred to the appropriate standing committee.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to three petitions.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my point of order which arises out of question period on Thursday, October 20. I apologize for the delay in bringing this up, but I am sure after I explain myself, the House will know the reason for my delay.

On the day that I asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans about the use of dragging our bottom trawling equipment in our economic fishery zone, the minister categorically answered:

—over the past three years in the NAFO regulatory area there were no Canadian vessels using the kind of gear that was displayed yesterday on the Hill by the group that was here.

I took the minister at his word. Over the weekend it became apparent to me that the minister may have been wrong, so I decided to check the facts.

We have some photographs, people's names and equipment that used exactly that type of gear within the last couple of years. Apparently, those kinds of dragging nets, door and footgear, which were displayed on the lawn, are still very much used by Canadian vessels in Canadian waters, by international vessels in international waters and by some Canadian vessels in international waters.

It appears that the minister may have inadvertently said something that was possibly incorrect. I raise this with you, Mr. Speaker, because somehow along the way the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has received or has ascertained some incorrect information.

I know you, Mr. Speaker, will take this as a very serious situation. I would like the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to correct the record.

• (1510)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand this might be a perfect example where adjournment proceedings might help the hon. member explore this issue further.

The Speaker: This does sound like an extension of question period to me. I know the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore obviously has been very diligent and I am sure the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is delighted to hear all this news.

In the circumstances, perhaps we will have a very brief comment from the minister, since he seems keen to say something, and then we will move on.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to absolutely clarify this, I had this information provided to me today. First, there were no Canadian groundfish vessels using bottom trawl gear in the NAFO regulatory area from 2001 to 2005. That is the first point, and it is very important.

The second point is that in 2001 one Canadian shrimp vessel used otter trawl gear for 31 fishing days in the NAFO regulatory area beyond the 200 mile limit. In 2003 two Canadian shrimp vessels used otter trawl gear in the NRA for 27 fishing days.

I have one more point. There were no Canadian shrimp vessels using this gear in NRA in 2002—

The Speaker: I suggest the two hon. members correspond with one another with all those details or have an adjournment debate. That might be the way to do it.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Finance requesting an extension of 30 sitting days to consider Bill C-285, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, exclusion of income received by an athlete from a non-profit club, society or association.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a) a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, October 26 immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[Translation]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this means that our committee works very hard.

I have the honour to present the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Finance on an extension of 30 days to consider Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (exemption from taxation of 50% of United States social security payments to Canadian residents).

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put, and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, October 26, 2005, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed on behalf of hundreds of Canadians from across the country, in particular young Canadians on campuses across the country where these signatures were gathered. A number of these are from my own constituency of Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam.

The petition recognizes the growing threat posed by date rape drugs GHB and Rohypnol when used in the commission of sexual assaults.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to create a separate schedule for date rape drugs, establish a national initiative to educate women on the dangers of date rape drugs and establish a national task force to develop new guidelines in the collection and documentation of evidence in sexual assault investigations.

This is one of a number of petitions I have tabled in the House. I am pleased to announce that I have collected more than 10,000 signatures from young men and women across the country who want the government to address this important issue.

AUTISM

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to introduce a petition on the subject of autism spectrum disorder. The petition draws the attention of hon. members to the fact that there are treatments, ABA and IBI therapy, for children with autism from which they may greatly benefit.

The petitioners encourage Parliament to amend the Canada Health Act to include IBI therapy as a medically necessary treatment.

The issue of autism is very important. As Canadians, we need to do better in supporting children with autism.

• (1515)

[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition today. With these 10,000 signatures, there are now 130,000 who have stated their objection to the decision to close Quebec City's postal sorting station. We know that this decision will have a very negative economic impact. We are talking about the loss of 500 jobs, which means a \$15 million shortfall for the Quebec City region.

I have here in this box about 20,000 of those signatures. My colleagues will continue to table the rest of the signatures this week, to show that the Quebec City region is mobilized in its opposition to the closure of the Quebec City sorting station.

[English]

COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure today to table two petitions on behalf of my constituents.

The first one is with regard to constituents who are concerned that the community access program, CAP, is currently in its last year of existence. Given the enormous success that it has known right across Canada, and specifically in everyone's communities, they call upon the government to renew this critically important program.

UGANDA

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with regard to a group of people in my riding who are working extremely hard to represent the people of northern Uganda.

Routine Proceedings

They note that 100,000 adults and children have perished in the 18-year-old civil war in northern Uganda, that 30,000 children have been abducted and that there are close to two million displaced citizens living IDP camps across the nation.

They are calling upon Parliament to take action by fulfilling the goals, as outlined in a Winnipeg communiqué that was established at the International Conference on War Affected Children in September 2000. They are asking us to take a leadership role at the United Nations to protect the people of northern Uganda.

[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post's decision to close down the Quebec City sorting centre has raised a furor in our region, from both the socio-economic and political stakeholders and the general public. I have proof of their support in this petition bearing the signatures of 130,000 people who are demanding that the mail processing operations and the jobs connected with them be kept in Quebec City. Today I am presenting a portion of this, with several thousand signatures.

[English]

ADOPTION

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present a petition, as I have on every occasion this fall, this time on behalf of residents of Cobourg, Port Hope, Smiths Falls, Dundas, Stoney Creek, Kingsville, St. Thomas, Thornhill and a number of other communities too numerous to mention.

All these citizens are concerned that on average about 2,000 children are adopted from other countries and brought to Canada each year, and that despite this fact, other countries, namely the United States of America and Great Britain, provide automatic citizenship for these young children and our country does not.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to immediately enact legislation to grant automatic citizenship to minors adopted from other countries by Canadian citizens with this citizenship being immediately granted upon the finalization of the adoption.

I note that the minister said that he would bring forward stand alone legislation to actually accomplish this and I think it is high time he acts upon that commitment.

[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Bernard Cleary (Louis-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 130,000 people have signed a petition calling for immediate suspension of the plan to close the Quebec City mail sorting facility and transfer Quebec City operations to Montreal. Today I am presenting a portion of this, with several thousand signatures.

Government Orders

• (1520)

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I too am presenting a portion of a petition initiated by the local section of the Quebec postal workers union. It is signed by 130,000 people in opposition to the closure of the Quebec City sorting facility and transfer of its operations to Montreal. Ontario has six sorting centres. There will be just one for all of Quebec. There is no plan for modernization. They are just doing this for the advantages offered by a move. They want to pack everything up and head for Montreal instead of relocating and modernizing the Quebec City sorting facility. This is an absurd idea and the petition says so.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the petitions contained in this box on behalf of several thousand signatories. In them they express their concerns and their rejection of the Canada Post decision to close the Quebec City sorting facility.

As we know, this decision would have very negative impacts on the economy, as well as on the quality of service the people of the greater Quebec City region are entitled to expect. In this operation we are carrying out today and the rest of the week, we are the spokespersons for over 130,000 people who have voiced their opposition to this decision. I am pleased and extremely proud to present these thousands of signatures on behalf of the population of the greater Quebec City area.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act, as amended, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

In discussing the bill, a couple of things need to be said, some complimentary and some that are perhaps not quite as complimentary.

The bill came to the committee before second reading. It had sort of a framework but there was nothing in it. We did not know exactly what the bill would actually be doing. All the parties came together and looked at the bill. We listened to witnesses and to what our constituents were saying about the do not call list for people soliciting merchandise, opinions or whatever by telephone. The committee looked at what could be done. In a short time it became

very apparent that the bill was sadly deficient. The bill lacked certain provisions.

However something happened this morning that really shows the irony of this place and, in particular, the fickleness of the Liberal government that is in charge of this place at this time. I believe it was on Thursday of last week when the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc presented a motion to the House to add to the list of those who were to be excluded from the do not call list certain solicitations by newspapers using a telephone. At that time the hon. member asked for the unanimous consent of the House because clearly the amendment had not been made in committee but was being made to the House at the report stage.

The Liberals decided that because it came from the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc, who is a Conservative and on the opposition side of the House, they refused unanimous consent. Lo and behold, a weekend passed and the first thing Monday morning when the House resumed, the parliamentary secretary said that they would like to have the unanimous consent of the House to introduce a motion. What was the motion? The motion was identical, even to the wording, to what the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc had presented to the House.

It must have become apparent to the Liberals that the member for Edmonton—Leduc had once again demonstrated the wisdom of listening to constituents so that over the weekend suddenly the Liberals realized this was a good motion. Today, lo and behold, they presented the motion and it was unanimously accepted by the House. It is amazing what a weekend will do. I just hope the Liberals will recognize over the years that these weekends can be very significant.

It is the one exception, I think, that has happened in this House. I have a list here of about 19 different promises that have been made by the Prime Minister to bring about democratic reform. Over and over again the House has passed motions and has agreed to take certain actions but what happened? Nothing. I believe the time has come for us to realize that we need to do the things we say we are going to do and live up to our promises.

While this is a good thing that is happening, there are also some very negative things that happened. On the good side, it should be noted that all the political parties in the House worked very cooperatively together to build the legislation to set up a do not call registry. In fact there is no dissension among the political parties. I and my party will be supporting the legislation. In fact, it will not be necessary to call for a standing vote, as far as I am concerned, on the legislation.

I would also like to refer to another thing in this bill that we want to look at, and that has to do with the definition of existing business relationships. A number of presentations were made and one of the bones of contention concerned the definition of an existing business relationship. We know the do not call registry exists in the United States and that it has defined an existing business relationship in its legislation. The Americans have said that one of the criteria of an existing business relationship is that the relationship has been in existence for 18 months. After that it is no longer considered to be an existing relationship.

Government Orders

•(1525)

If this kind of thing is legislated and the proposal now is that this be legislated, this causes certain hardships in certain cyclical businesses. I would like to read what the Canadian Marketing Association said on this particular subject. What I am going to read is in reply to a particular request from one of the small businesses to the president of the Canadian Marketing Association. This particular concern was raised in the spring of 2004.

Mr. John Gustavson, the president and CEO of the Canadian Marketing Association which, by the way, is the largest marketing association in Canada, has been one of the most well-known proponents in favour of creating a federal do not call list in Canada. He concurs that the cyclical nature of businesses should be looked at. Mr. John Gustavson said:

Thank you for taking the time to write respecting our position on a national do not call registry.

“Our position” being this particular business. He said:

We agree entirely with your position. Every piece of legislation passed in North America on this subject so far (in 26 states prior to the U.S. federal legislation taking effect) has provided an exemption for business to contact existing customers. While there have been variances on the definition of “existing customer”, we believe it is important to include in the exemption customers that would only be contacted during a normal buying cycle.

That is very significant, a normal buying cycle. He continued:

Similar to your situation, these contacts may be several years apart.

What is being proposed is 18 months. That is not several years. That is less than that. He added:

In fact, our own Code of Ethics contains such an exemption.

That is the Canadian Marketing Association. He concluded:

Unfortunately, in trying to summarize our position in a few words, the details of our position were omitted by the reporter. I can assure you however that we consider such an exemption to be fundamental and may even be protected constitutionally.

Thank you again for your comments and I can assure you we will vigorously advocate for the right of business to contact its own customers by telephone.

We are not saying there should not be a definition for an existing business relationship. We are suggesting that when legislation is so specific as to require 18 months as the maximum duration of a business relationship, that makes it impossible for the regulating body to exercise any judgment. It seems to me that on the three year review, which is definitely part of the legislation, that may very well come up for review and consideration at that time.

I would like to encourage us to be very cognizant of the fact that in order for legislation to meet the real needs and requirements of business and to support small businesses in particular, we be cognizant of that particular fact.

I suppose I should recognize that some legislation that we have before the House now and that exists in our books is so general as to make interpretation so broad that no one knows for sure what is meant. In this particular case, the legislation is so specific that it provides absolutely no discretion or judgment on the part of those who are implementing this legislation.

Every once in a while we ask ourselves when are we going to develop a concern that in fact creates a situation that allows businesses to prosper, and allows the concerns of our constituents to

be expressed and adopted and included. It is time for some common sense to prevail, both in the writing of legislation and in the actual implementation of it.

My appeal is for us to work on principle, but at the same time let us also exercise judgment, so that we do not have a biased position that works against the particular group and in favour of others.

* * *

•(1530)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place between all parties concerning the debate scheduled for later this day, as well as tomorrow, in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1. I believe you would find consent for the following motion:

That the debates scheduled for Monday, October 24, 2005, and Tuesday, October 25, 2005, on government business No. 18 and No. 19 respectively, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, be a maximum of five hours rather than four hours.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): 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)

* * *

[*English*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-37, An Act to amend the Telecommunications Act, as amended, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague. I am not in the position that he is in. He is on the committee and he has followed the development of this legislation with a great deal of interest. I am not a member of the committee.

My question has to do with the status of charities, social services, community organizations, and arts and cultural organizations in all of our communities with respect to this legislation. My understanding is that groups such as that would be exempt from the legislation. They would be able to continue with their normal work and normal practices.

Government Orders

I ask this because it is extremely important for the vibrancy of these often very tiny organizations in our communities that they not be restricted by legislation of this type. I wonder if my colleague could give us some indication that I am right.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the amendments to the bill that was adopted by the committee had to do with the registration of charities and they would be exempt. The type of registration we are talking about in particular refers to charities that are registered within the meaning of the Income Tax Act. That is the significant proviso. If they are registered under the Income Tax Act as a charity, they would be exempt. That is very significant.

I agree with the hon. member that the lifeblood of many of these charities depends on the ability to solicit by telephone and most people would not object to that.

There was another provision that was accepted by the committee and it had to do with people who perhaps are called by a charity and would wish their names to be registered as not wanting to be called again. The charity would then have to keep that list and not call those people again, but that is a small detail because it does not cover the overall situation. It just allows individuals to make exceptions for themselves for particular charities.

• (1535)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country for sharing his time.

I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Newton—North Delta to participate in the third reading debate on Bill C-37. This bill addresses telemarketing calls by enabling the CRTC to establish and enforce a do not call registry similar to ones already found in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Specifically, Bill C-37 would amend the section of the Telecommunications Act that deals with telemarketers by adding the power to establish databases and to make any order with respect to these databases.

It would also give the CRTC the power to levy substantial penalties against telemarketers and to contract with a private sector third party to operate the service. Penalties of \$1,500 per offending call for individuals and \$15,000 per offending call for corporations would be imposed for telemarketers who do not respect the list.

Previous to this bill, Canadians have had access to privately operated do not call registries. The Canadian Marketing Association, CMA, would register consumers for their do not call list. However, not all telemarketers are members of the CMA, so this registration did not eliminate all unsolicited telemarketing calls.

In addition, the CRTC required that each telemarketing company maintain their own do not call list. Consumers could ask to be placed on the list, but only after receiving a call. The list was maintained by the telemarketing company for three years.

We have all received unwanted calls from people attempting to sell goods or services. It could be a telemarketing pitch from the local newspaper, a credit card company, a cleaning service, a charity, or even a politician wanting one's vote.

Sometimes we may welcome these calls because they would provide useful information or a product that we are interested in, but other times, they are nothing but an annoyance.

The Conservative Party supports the establishment of a Canadian do not call registry within parameters clearly defined by this Parliament and with reasonable exemptions provided for charities, political parties, polling firms and companies that wish to contact their current customers. In the original version of Bill C-37, these exemptions were not laid out by the government.

Furthermore, the power to determine these details was delegated by the Liberals to the CRTC and its regulatory powers rather than to the elected representatives of the House. In fact, before going to committee, the bill was almost an empty shell, with most of the details left to the regulations.

The bill is extremely light on details. There are no exceptions to the list. There are no details about how the list would be maintained, what information would be required from consumers, how telemarketers would check the list, how often they must check the list, and who would have access to the list or any reporting on how the list would be run.

As a result, we did not know if there would be any exclusions to the list, how much it would cost or who would operate the list and so on. Maybe it would be like the gun registry fiasco, costing \$2 billion rather than \$2 million. Those things are not clear.

The government habitually introduces shell bills that lack substance, are written in, often, incomplete, general terms and are very vague in intent. So, no substance, no nitty-gritty, no details, but only a shell.

• (1540)

Much of the law that affects Canadians is not found in the Statutes of Canada but in the thousands and thousands of regulations made pursuant to powers granted by acts of Parliament. This leaves the door wide open to put through regulations that define our laws, without the proper checks and balances.

To curtail that, to plug that big black hole in the regulatory process, I introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-205, which in fact was the only private member's bill to receive royal assent. That bill was introduced by the Canadian Alliance. It restored some accountability to the regulation making process because it brought under the umbrella of the government all the quasi-government organizations like the CRTC and many others. They used to make the regulations but they were not under the purview of parliamentary scrutiny.

Government Orders

I plugged that black hole in the regulatory reforms, but still the government habitually introduces legislation without any detail. It leaves all the details to the regulatory process. In doing so, the Liberal government has effectively gutted the parliamentary process of accountability and transparency in the formulation of laws. Parliament is no longer at the centre of the law making process.

The Prime Minister can talk all the talk about regulatory or democratic reforms, but his track record is the weakest in the history of Canada for democratic reforms existing in this House the way that democracy exists in Canada. In fact, in this minority government, I do not see any real democracy in existence, as the House leader of the Conservative Party said earlier.

During second reading debate I outlined all of these concerns. I concluded my speech by saying that:

—the registry, if established, must be “within parameters clearly defined by Parliament and with reasonable exemptions provided for charities, political parties and companies that wish to contact their current customers” and that we must craft a more detailed piece of legislation so both consumers and telemarketers are clear as to how the do not call registry will work.

After second reading, at committee, the Conservative Party members worked to amend the bill and to add several new clauses to the Telecommunications Act. The following are among the amendments passed at committee.

Three years after the do not call list comes into force, it will be reviewed by Parliament.

Next, any person making a telecommunications call must, at the beginning of the call, identify the purpose of the call and the person or the organization on whose behalf the call is being made. This was a Conservative amendment.

Exemptions are being granted to the following: charities, political parties, candidates, the riding associations, et cetera, and surveys, or calls made for the sole purpose of collecting information for a survey of members of the public.

As for individual lists, all the parties that have been made exempt must still keep individual no not call lists. If a person is called by a charity and asks to be placed on the do not call list held by that charity, the charity is forced to comply and is not allowed to call that individual for three years, which is the current time limit. Of course, the length of time could be changed by the CRTC through the regulations once the bill is passed.

All of these were Conservative amendments.

As I have only one minute left, I will summarize. Seniors are not protected under the bill. Telemarketing companies scam seniors, selling gambling, lotteries, et cetera to them. The bill also does not address unsolicited ads on the Internet, the pop-ups. As well, young children, when learning on the Internet and doing their homework, are bombarded with vulgar and pornographic ads. Nothing has been done about this.

● (1545)

To conclude, I would like to say that a centrally administered national do not call list provides the means for consumers to avoid unsolicited telemarketing calls. A well-run do not call list will provide consumers with choice and protection.

The Conservative Party supports the establishment of a do not call registry within the parameters I have clearly defined. I personally still have many concerns. I have tried to allude to them, but my time is up, so let me close by saying that I will be watching closely and will protect the best interests of my constituents of Newton—North Delta and all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. I understand that we cannot resolve everything. He will probably agree with me that we need not ask too much of the Liberal Party, which would not want to resolve all the problems. I agree with him that the spam mail we are bombarded with on the Internet will probably become the subject of another bill in this House.

As far as phone calls are concerned, I want to know if my colleague agrees that, just as the bill sets out to do, once the list of organizations to exempt, such as charities, is established, individuals should be given the opportunity to decide whether to be put on the list to no longer receive inconvenient phone calls from all these companies that are increasingly specializing in telemarketing.

Does my colleague agree that once we decide which agencies will be exempt from the do not call list, it would be a good idea to have legislation to allow individuals to sign up on a list to no longer receive unsolicited calls? We have to realize how difficult it is to define the not-for-profit organizations to exempt. There is also the whole issue of political parties, as he mentioned. Once we agree on the agencies that could never be excluded, we should pass in this House legislation allowing individuals, who are fed up with receiving phone calls from telemarketing companies, to no longer be disrupted by that type of call. This borders on harassment, even if, in practice, it is not. We need some type of legislation in this House. Does my colleague agree that we must pass such legislation as soon as possible?

[*English*]

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Mr. Speaker, even though the translation of the member's question was not very clear, I thank the member for bringing forth this issue. I know that the legislation is important and must be passed in the House.

Consumers in Canada deserve protection. They do not want any harassment or intimidation by telemarketers or in other unwanted calls. They should not be forced to receive those calls.

The member is also right. We cannot accomplish everything through the legislation, but we have the responsibility as the chosen elected members to represent our constituents and to raise important concerns relating to this issue on behalf of our constituents.

Government Orders

I brought forward the Internet issue because I have not seen any legislation from the government that would protect our children. The children in my constituency and in Canada deserve protection. They are on the Internet, doing their homework and trying to learn as much as they can, and they are unnecessarily bombarded with those pop-up ads. I am surprised that those ads to which our vulnerable children are exposed are pornographic images.

The government has done absolutely nothing to put into place some sort of measure which would restrict those ads if children are at the computer learning and doing their homework. They are unnecessarily distracted and in fact unwittingly persuaded through those pornographic materials.

In a family set-up, that is not the right thing. We have the violence chip, which can prevent violent movies or other stuff on the TV. Why can we not have the advantage of scientific research put on the home computer so that our children are not exposed to those unwanted, undesirable ads? We do not want to be disturbed by a simple phone call, but how about our kids? They are given all kinds of material that we do not want them to have.

Similarly, there is no restriction on fax lines. The telemarketing companies are going around the law. They are going around the restrictions in the United States, for example, by using fax messaging. The fax message does not display the name of the sender, the company that is sending, or any phone number. What is there in the bill which will make sure that if we get an unsolicited fax message we can put ourselves on a do not call or do not fax list?

Those are important considerations. Otherwise, I am supporting the bill. It is a step forward, but a small step.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to speak today on Bill C-37. I had spoken last week on this bill, beginning that presentation with my story of being solicited at home for a vacuum cleaner, one fine Saturday morning at 9 a.m. I find that these examples are far too frequent in recent years.

We know that the field of technology is evolving. The marketing companies are pushing sales more and more, and their salespersons as well. So we have reached the point where, today, this bill will become a kind of consumer protection act, to protect consumer privacy.

I consider the type of call I was mentioning earlier to be out of place, coming on a Saturday morning or often at dinner time. For salespersons know that, as people are very busy these days, it is often early in the morning, at dinner time or after dinner that they can be most easily reached. This is an infringement of the privacy of consumers.

Ours is a world in which everything is moving faster and faster, where the entire working class is confronted with more and more demands. When anyone who works comes back home in the evening, he or she deserves a little relaxation, a little time to spend with the family. This is important, and we speak often about it. There are all kinds of projects for balancing work and family. In Quebec, this is in fact a very important issue.

Imagine, in the evening, when you are at home, receiving two or three telephone calls like this. Often the people who call are persistent. It is difficult to simply hang up on them. They have a good psychological approach: they are open-minded and very kind. People spend time with them, and finally realize that they are being solicited. The more time goes by, the greater the pressure. Often people hesitate to hang up. They can lose 5, 10 or 15 minutes of their time, of their privacy, at the end of which they may say no. All the same, they will have wasted time to the detriment of their family.

The bill we have before us today protects consumers and privacy generally.

Neither can the do not call principle be applied to everyone. We have understood this. At present, the bill provides that charities will be exempt from its application. That means that a charity cannot be prohibited from calling a certain list of persons. The reason for this is fundamental. As I often say to the community groups and charitable organizations in my own riding, if we did not have these groups, it would be very difficult for society to function.

Everyone knows that public finances are limited, both in the provinces and in Canada. Obviously there is growing pressure on public finances, particularly in the provinces, whereas in Ottawa there is a big surplus. In the provinces there are many restrictions. Consequently the government sometimes withdraws from certain sectors of activity, especially social activity. As a result, it is the community groups that come to the rescue of those who are somewhat more disadvantaged.

I find it totally unjustified to tell the Red Cross for example that it will be on an exemption list and will no longer be allowed to phone a number of people whose names are on a do not call list because they do not want to be called. The Red Cross may be a case in point these days, in light of the earthquake in Pakistan and all that is happening in that part of the world.

I believe that they need funding. We can depend on the governments, but we must also depend on organizations of this type. These are often non governmental organizations, people who go to the rescue of victims who are in a very bad situation. The government is not the only one asked to act; organizations of this type also get involved.

They are also active, on a smaller scale, in our respective ridings. Who does not know of the organizations looking after children or battered women?

● (1555)

Solicitation is very important to them. Cutting their funding by telling them that, in the future, they will no longer be allowed to phone 40% or 50% of the citizens of St-Jean is not helping them. And it is not helping the society at large either.

It is therefore perfectly understandable that the bill provide for exemptions. Charities—registered ones naturally—will be in a separate category and protected, because there are sometimes charlatans in that field as well. Traps are to be avoided. People must necessarily be registered to have their names on the do not call list.

Government Orders

The bill also deals with the issue of business relationships. This week, I visited a very dynamic business in my region. It is a computer company and it markets absolutely fantastic software. I was introduced to the woman in charge of marketing. That is all she does all day long. It is quite usual for companies to solicit bilateral service exchanges or to sell each other services, whether they are in the same field or different ones.

Business relationships are very important. We do not want to suppress them with a bill of this kind. However, I do not think the bill is aimed at that issue but rather at excessive marketing to individuals. Business relationships must continue to be protected. I obviously do not need to spell it all out. It is important for companies to be identified and protected so that all business relationships continue.

There are also political calls. Here we are kind of making our own sales pitch. It is important to preserve this right, which I think is a right to information. I often say to young people or people who do not have a lot of confidence in politics: "You know, everything you do is political. Everything you put on your table, the children you send to school or daycare, when you use hospitals, those are all political issues.

It is important, therefore, for political calls to continue. Otherwise, we would be risking anarchy. Many people do not believe in politics. Nevertheless, we must continue, with the means at our disposal, to make as many people as possible aware of how important politics still are. It is a basic right to information.

The same is true of opinion polls. I am not speaking just of political opinion polls but of opinion polls in general about what people like or do not like about society or how they feel social problems should be addressed. We feel that these polls are a very important right to information that must absolutely be maintained.

I was very happy to arrive this morning and discover before delivering my speech that our Liberal friends had finally agreed to unanimous consent on newspapers. That might seem strange because the opposition members, both in the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois, had tried furiously last week to get unanimous consent but could not. Our colleagues must have received some food for thought over the weekend. Maybe they got some telephone calls from representatives of major newspapers such as *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* saying, "Listen, our Liberal friends, we would like to be exempted from that, too". However it came about, the result is the same.

So, this morning we found out that newspapers were excluded, just like registered charities and political telecommunications. It is important that newspapers be excluded because, again, we are talking about the right to information. I can say unequivocally that we have some very good newspapers in my riding. *Le Canada français* is one of them. There are people there whose job is specifically to do telemarketing all day long. If we want our local newspapers to survive, it is important that they be able to go and get subscribers, which are often individuals. It is important to read a newspaper once a week or once a day. I am not talking about advertisement, but about the importance for a citizen to keep informed, both at the local and national levels. So, it is important that

the instruments that ensure the survival of these newspapers be protected.

In the end, there was unanimous consent on this issue. I will be pleased to support the bill, which now also includes newspapers.

• (1600)

What is also interesting about the bill is that it provides for a review after three years, to see how things are working out. Some irritants will likely surface, but we will be able to review the legislation three years from now. Such a review is often not included in bills, although it may be less indicated in some cases. However, I think that, in this case, it is perfectly suited to the bill now before us. In three years, we will see if other organizations should be excluded from the scope of the act.

There may be other ways of looking at how the list should be controlled. I will talk about this later on. So, if there is a major problem, we will be able to change some provisions of the act three years from now. This will prevent the government from deciding alone the political agenda, setting the procedure and selecting the issues that come before the House, and from deciding to not present this bill again to the House, even if there are irritants. Such a provision will benefit everyone. It is a safeguard, a protection. If we find out that we erred or that we did not have all the information, we will be able to correct the situation.

I was also surprised to see that the Canadian Marketing Association did not object to the bill. In fact, the CMA president himself said that it was about time we did something. With the deregulation that currently prevails, whereby there are practically no rules in effect in Canada, we are witnessing, as I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, a proliferation of this kind of approach. Frankly, consumers, myself included, are tired of constantly being disturbed. We are also noticing a change, although not for the better, in that there is an increasing number of these calls and companies are becoming more and more insistent. The situation has reached the point where, when I get home, there are always messages on my answering machine. These companies called and they left messages. Out of all the messages that will be waiting when I get home on Thursday, probably one quarter of them will have been left by organizations or individuals doing solicitation and urging me to call them back. Of course, I will not do so. Not only do I not have the time because of my duties as a member of Parliament, but I am also somewhat reluctant to do so because I find these companies to be quite insistent.

So, the CMA too confirmed the existence of a problem that needs to be corrected. It did not object to Bill C-37. I will talk about it in a little while. It wants to be involved to some degree, particularly as regards the registry issue. However, the Bloc Québécois' position on this is quite clear.

Not only is the CMA saying that such legislation was needed, it is also realizing that, in any case, the people whose names will be on that do not call list were not buying from these companies. In its opinion, the impact of such a list will not be that great on its members. So, in the end, it agrees with this measure.

Government Orders

We did not start from square one on that issue. The Americans had a bit of a head start on us. In 2003, they noted the same kind of problem and legislated to establish what is called a do not call registry. It seems to be working. I do not know whether that particular piece of legislation includes a provision like ours for review in three years. One thing that is for sure is that it is already working. Sixty two million Americans have registered. This type of solicitation was bothering them, and they wanted the companies to stop phoning them. The legislation provides for penalties. That is another thing. If we pass legislation, the legislation must not be too soft. It must not be merely an incentive; it should make a real impact. It is important that marketing experts understand that certain conditions have to be met, failing which there will be stiff penalties to pay. This is already in place in the United States. The majority of the 62 million people I referred to earlier are already reporting a sharp decrease in the number of calls received; in fact, 87% reported receiving hardly any calls.

•(1605)

So they are very happy with this legislation. It is time now in Canada to act accordingly.

I want to speak now about the registry and how the CMA wants to become involved. When anyone says registry, of course, the nightmare that people usually think of is the gun registry. I took part in the debate last week. There were a lot of questions about this registry. Let us be very clear. The legislation must be as specific as possible and there must be as much information as possible about this registry.

It would be good if they could tell us every three or four months how much the operation cost for the previous months. We do not want to have the kind of surprise we had with the firearms control registry. It was supposed to cost \$2 million a year and now it costs \$2 billion. It is the taxpayers who pay for that. This is another scandal. People often talk about the sponsorship scandal, but there is also the gun registry scandal. That is probably the biggest scandal in dollar terms. There is quite a difference between \$2 million and \$2 billion. A thousand times more. Everyone agrees that this did not make sense.

Our fears are understandable, therefore, when they talk about registries. We want to ensure that there are as many guarantees as possible. But we do not want to throw the baby out with the bath water. We believe that this is important legislation and one way to exercise control is to have a registry. We are in a tough spot, though, because we saw what happened with the gun registry. It cost \$2 million instead of \$2 billion. On the other hand, we cannot just cast all these kinds of bills aside whenever the word "registry" appears. That is not the way to see things. By the way, there are a lot of discussions every year when the time arrives for requests for budget surpluses to be given to the Canadian firearms program. People do say that they can hardly believe it.

The basic principle was to control firearms. I get telephone calls myself from mothers who lost their daughters in the massacre of students at the Polytechnique. I cannot resist these mothers who tell me that we have to keep the firearms registry. It is useless for me to tell them that it costs \$80 million extra; for them, it is not a question

of money. For a society to control firearms, for them, it is non-negotiable.

It is always a bit awkward to be asked to vote more funding for a program that has already cost \$2 billion, when it was meant to cost only \$2 million annually.

The same thing applies here. We have some concerns, but we do believe that the bill is a valuable one. We just need to pin down the matter of the registry to ensure that it does not get out of hand like the last time. I should make that clear, out of the Liberal Party's hands.

Once again, the opposition members are the ones who raised the issue. The Liberal Party was asked at one point whether it did not find \$2 billion instead of \$2 million to be sufficient. We are not the ones who dropped the ball. All we did was block it so that it did not roll further out of bounds. If we had not, the tab might well have gone over the \$2 billion mark by now.

We keep on insisting that the expenditures be reduced to acceptable levels. We will also insist that the registry that is an integral part of this bill be monitored as closely as possible to avoid a repetition of this pillaging of public funds.

We also do not want the registry to be kept by the Canadian Marketing Association. They will certainly not be given responsibility for it. That would be a bit like asking Colonel Sanders to keep an eye on the chicken coop. That is not what we want.

In closing, I will point out that we will need to address fraudulent telemarketing at a later time. The laws on this are very severe in the U.S., thereby driving the phony telemarketers back to Canada. They operate what are called boiler rooms, from which they systematically swindle people.

Unfortunately, the bill before us does not take this into account. I get the feeling that we would have to amend the Criminal Code instead.

Nevertheless, the Bloc Québécois will be supporting Bill C-37. We are, moreover, very pleased that newspapers have been added to the list of exemptions.

•(1610)

Hon. David Anderson (Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's speech was very interesting. He spoke a great deal about the issue of cost. It is a very important issue that affects every hon. member and all Canadians.

However, he did not say what cost he would find acceptable: \$2 million? \$10 million? \$100 million? From his speech, I have no idea. Although I agree with him that the cost should not be too high, I have no idea what he would consider a reasonable cost. He is the one who used the term "reasonable".

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, that is a \$50,000 question.

Government Orders

We are talking about a reasonable cost. When the gun registry was established, we felt that the cost of \$2 million a year was reasonable. We had agreed to \$2 million a year. Now taxpayers are being told that we want to set up a do not call registry. I think \$2 million ought to do it. However, I just have one thing to say to my colleague: we do not want this to end up costing \$2 billion, which is what happened with the gun registry.

I will talk to my colleagues. They will probably tell me that this amount could be slightly more or slightly less. However, we do not want any overspending. We want tight control. Perhaps there could be a report to Parliament on a regular basis, every quarter. When a reasonable amount has been determined, then we can ensure it is respected. That is how I see things for now. If we had planned for \$2 million for the gun registry, then I think we could plan \$2 million for the do not call registry.

• (1615)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been following the debate with great interest because, as I mentioned earlier, I am interested in the legislation but I am not a member of the committee.

It seems to me this is a case where the legislation has been developed in committee, or at least large parts of it have been, and as we know in the current Parliament the opposition has control of the committee. We are dealing with legislation which has been greatly shaped by the opposition and I am pleased to hear that members of the various parties support it.

I asked earlier about my concern regarding charities and charitable organizations. My colleague opposite gave me an answer to that, that they will be exempt in various ways from this do not call legislation.

I am also concerned about businesses, particularly small businesses in my riding. Quite a lot of these businesses have lists which they already phone. For example, I am on the list of the company that services my car. That firm may phone me occasionally about servicing my car. I believe there is provision in the legislation to protect groups like that carrying on their normal practice.

I wonder if my colleague from the Bloc would care to comment on that so that we can have on the record what the situation is for small businesses that have call lists of their own.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. I will go back to the example given by my colleague. If one of his business contacts buys a car from a certain dealer and the car is due for maintenance, the dealer would be entirely justified to call its client to tell him that, based on his mileage, he should come in for a check-up. We have nothing against that.

However, it would not be justified for a car dealership to systematically call people outside its client base to offer them its current specials and urge them to visit it to obtain particular benefits. This can already be seen on television, with the famous ad saying that the product is available to everyone at the employee price. I have nothing against television. Nonetheless, telemarketing consists in

calling people systematically in this way and soliciting them, and that is what this bill is about.

Business relations among companies as well as business relations between a customer and his car dealer do not pose a problem. It is like the pharmacist calling his client to tell him he no longer has the necessary medication and inviting him to the pharmacy to renew his prescription. The bill permits this.

In fact, it is important that this be maintained, because otherwise our society would not function. I hope I have answered my colleague's question.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I want to congratulate my colleague from Saint-Jean on his excellent presentation. I would simply like to ask him the following question: is it not the industry itself which, having profited from this system as it has, has caused us to issue guidelines today?

These days, some banks no longer have branches, and some people sell products without running a store. It is because of an entire industry that we no longer have corner branches. Every company has turned to the telephone.

In a way, that is what we want to defend against. We want to allow citizens who still want to do business with companies that have branches to have that option, instead of doing business with people who call them on the phone. It is one way of doing business. As my colleague was saying, we do not want to do harm to companies that carry on business relations with individuals. What we want to prevent is banks with no branches and stores with no buildings.

I would like to hear my colleague's response on this question.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent comment. It has often been demonstrated that companies now will stop at nothing to ensure a profit for their shareholders. That includes closing down outlets.

Not for nothing is the Canadian Marketing Association in full change mode. That change is coming fast, because it has to address the disappearance of places of business. What is more, pressure is being placed on the poor telemarketers. I must say, that is an occupation that I would never want. I used to be a vacuum cleaner salesman, and I would visit customers to talk to them and try to sell them a product. The situation now, on the other hand, is that we are getting calls regularly, every day, to sell us vacuum cleaners, encyclopedias, etc.

With the closure of places of business, we are now in a marketing transition. Companies are putting pressure on their own telemarketers, who are paid for each sale. That is why they become so insistent. As a result, the government is obliged to legislate in this matter.

• (1620)

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by congratulating my colleague, the hon. member for Saint-Jean, on his accurate and enlightened remarks on Bill C-37.

Government Orders

Naturally, like him, I am concerned about protecting my fellow citizens against telemarketing abuse. I agree with him on some of the exemptions that should be included in this bill on telemarketing, namely charities such as United Way and the Red Cross. It is important that they not be on the list that will be established.

I also share the concern of the hon. member for Saint-Jean about the abuse that has taken place in the management of the gun registry. We now know that this abuse has resulted in unconscionable costs in excess of \$2 billion.

How does the hon. member for Saint-Jean suggest that the Liberal government avoid allocating excessive funding to the establishment of such a registry?

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I must say that our Liberal friends will have to pay the price for that soon, after the holidays. We are expecting a second report. People have had enough of the outrageous overspending on this kind of programs and registries.

That is why, earlier in my remarks, in reference to the registry per se, I indicated that it would be important that, as is often provided for in legislation, reports be presented to Parliament on a regular basis, every four months or semi-annually for example, as required, so as to know where things stand with the registry and how much it is costing. First, cost guidelines have to be established; then, Parliament would have to be satisfied that these need to be exceeded. The program must not be allowed to operate for one year or two before we realize, much to our astonishment, that it has cost \$2 billion, instead of \$2 million as originally planned.

My hon. colleague is right. After the gun registry boondoggle, Parliament will have to be vigilant and keep a close eye on the costs associated with this registry.

[*English*]

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.

(Bill, as amended, read the third time and passed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from October 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-64, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (vehicle identification number), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to express my support today for this important government bill, Bill C-64, aimed at combating the involvement of organized crime in the theft of motor vehicles by making it an offence to tamper with a VIN.

The bill was inspired by a private member's bill brought forward to Parliament by our late colleague, Chuck Cadman, namely Bill C-287. In summary, Bill C-64 would make it an offence without

lawful excuse to alter, obliterate or remove a vehicle identification number on a motor vehicle under circumstances that give rise to a reasonable inference that it was done to conceal the identity of the motor vehicle.

It is proposed that anybody who commits this offence would be liable, if proceeded with by indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or would be liable to a summary conviction. By virtue of section 787 of the Criminal Code, those people convicted of a summary conviction offence where no specific penalty is provided face up to a maximum term of imprisonment of six months and/or a \$2,000 fine.

As previously indicated, Bill C-64 was inspired by private member's Bill C-287. Bill C-287 would have made it an offence for anybody without lawful excuse, the proof of which lies on the person, to alter, deface or remove a vehicle identification number on a motor vehicle. Bill C-287 provided that if proceeded with by an indictment, an offender would face up to five years imprisonment. Furthermore, if proceeded with by summary conviction, the offender would face up to six months imprisonment and/or a \$2,000 fine.

There are clearly similarities and differences between the current government bill and Bill C-287. Many members have indicated concern with the notable difference between the two bills. It has been significantly contentious in debate. I have listened with great interest to both points of view and would like to present my thoughts on the matter now.

First and foremost, Bill C-287 placed what is known as a persuasive burden on the accused to prove the existence of a lawful excuse for tampering with a VIN. Therefore the bill required the accused to prove on the balance of probabilities that he or she had a lawful excuse.

A foundational element of our criminal justice system is that an accused person will not be convicted of a criminal offence if he or she raise a reasonable doubt. Under Bill C-287, people accused of VIN tampering would face the prospect of a conviction even though they may have raised a considerable doubt as to their guilt. Therefore Bill C-287 and this reverse onus raises significant charter considerations.

Instead, Bill C-64 would require an accused to raise the defence of lawful excuse based on the usual tests in criminal law for raising a defence, namely the test of raising sufficient evidence on each element of the defence for it to be considered by the judge or the jury.

By adopting an offence, which would not on its face attract charter litigation, we are contributing to the utility of this offence as a prosecutorial tool as there is more likelihood that prosecutors will proceed on this VIN tampering charge to trial. In other words, it not only can be proclaimed but it can be applied as well.

I think all hon. members would agree that we want to ensure that the laws we pass in this place can and will be used for years to come.

Government Orders

In addition, Bill C-64 would require that the alteration, obliteration or removal of the vehicle identification number be done under circumstances that give rise to a reasonable inference that it was done to conceal the identity of the vehicle. This element was not included in Bill C-287.

The purpose of this element of Bill C-64 is to distance the offence from these people, such as legitimate auto wreckers or mechanics who may in the course of their work alter, remove or obliterate a vehicle identification number. This consideration was made as it would be bad policy indeed to craft an offence under which a large group of legitimate workers might be caught under its scope.

I think all members would agree that the manner in which the government bill addresses this issue is sound.

Various key justice system stakeholders have called on the Government of Canada to enact an offence for VIN tampering.

First, the National Committee to Reduce Auto Theft, a multi-stakeholder group established in May 2000 representing stakeholders from mainly the police community and the insurance industry, released a subcommittee report in March 2003 entitled "Organized Vehicle Theft Rings". This report, among other proposals, recommended the creation of a distinct VIN tampering offence in the Criminal Code.

• (1625)

In addition, in August 2003 the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police passed a resolution calling on the Government of Canada to create a Criminal Code offence specifically prohibiting the alteration, obliteration or removal of a vehicle identification number.

As well, in 2000 the Canadian Association of Police Boards passed a resolution calling on the federal government to enact legislation to combat theft in their communities which would include the creation of a Criminal Code offence for removing or obliterating a VIN number.

I am pleased to say that we have answered these calls with Bill C-64.

In 2004, there were nearly 170,000 motor vehicle thefts in Canada. This translates to a rate of roughly 530 vehicle thefts per rate of 100,000 people. My family and I are among that number, having had our vehicle stolen from our home last January. I share with many Canadians the feeling of violation and concern that comes with having a vehicle stolen from one's property.

I am pleased to note a slight decline in thefts since 2003 which in that year was 550 vehicle thefts per 100,000 people.

In order to compare certain provincial rates with the national rate, in 2004 the rate of motor vehicle thefts in B.C. was 889 per 100,000 and in Manitoba, it was 1,364 per 100,000. On the other end of the spectrum, Prince Edward Island had a rate of 187 per 100,000 and Ontario had 337 per 100,000.

Despite these variations in the rate of theft from province to province, this crime is still far too frequent in Canada. That is why, in addition to the current bill before the House, the Government of Canada is also committed to examining the issue of motor vehicle thefts more generally with our provincial and territorial partners.

In this regard, on January 25, at the federal-provincial-territorial ministers of justice meeting, as brought forward by my home province of Nova Scotia, all ministers agreed to send the matter of Criminal Code amendments affecting the categorization of motor vehicle thefts and increased penalties for those who steal vehicles and drive recklessly to their senior officials for study and report. Therefore, FPT officials are now working collaboratively on assessing whether a separate indictable offence is needed under the Criminal Code for auto theft and whether the current penalties are suitable for the crime.

In assessing whether Bill C-64 would truly add an additional useful tool for law enforcement, I would outline the existing ways that motor vehicle theft and related offences are dealt with under the code.

The Criminal Code addresses the crime of motor vehicle theft predominately through its theft provisions. If an offender is convicted of theft over \$5,000, he or she would be subject to a maximum of 10 years imprisonment on indictment.

In addition, those who engage in motor vehicle theft and related crimes are often charged with the offence of fraud. This offence carries a maximum of 14 years on indictment.

The offence of taking a motor vehicle without consent, such as joyriding, is a straight summary conviction offence and therefore an offender faces a maximum six month term of imprisonment or a \$2,000 fine or both when convicted.

As other speakers have noted before, the offence of possession of property obtained by crime is particularly relevant to those who engage in VIN tampering. Since there currently is no specific Criminal Code prohibition against VIN tampering, those who engage in this activity are often charged with the possession of property obtained by crime offence. The punishment for this offence, if the property is over \$5,000, is 10 years imprisonment on indictment.

All too often those who commit motor vehicle theft flee from a lawful pursuit by a law enforcement personnel. In doing so, these offenders endanger the lives of not only themselves but innocent third parties, law enforcement and others. If no one is injured as a result of this flight, then the offender would face up to five years imprisonment. Although, in the event that bodily harm results from this activity, the offender faces up to 14 years imprisonment. Finally, if death results the offender faces a maximum term of life.

I think all hon. members would agree that these existing offences provide a wide range of tools and sanctions that would be complemented by the addition of a VIN tampering offence.

• (1630)

I am encouraged also by the recent changes brought forward by my colleague the Minister of Transport. These regulations regarding the mandatory installation of vehicle immobilization devices have been noted as leading to the significant reduction of motor vehicle theft, especially in the cases involving youth. I look forward to a time when all vehicles manufactured in Canada have these important anti-theft devices installed.

Government Orders

I suspect all hon. members can agree that the creation of a Criminal Code offence for the intentional alteration, obliteration or removal of a vehicle identification number serves many purposes. Obviously it fills an existing gap in the Criminal Code in a meaningful way. It also provides a useful new tool for police and crown prosecutors in the investigation and prosecution of organized vehicle thefts.

Finally, it responds to the calls of key justice system stakeholders to enact such an offence. At the same time it honours the commitment of our colleague, the late Chuck Cadman, to these and other justice system issues by bringing forward a legislative reform that was advanced by that honourable and distinguished member of the House.

Therefore, I join other members of the House in supporting this bill. I urge all members to do the same.

● (1635)

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whenever we talk about justice issues all we hear from the other side is talk about maximum sentences, and yet when we read the newspapers and when people see these crimes being committed, seldom is the maximum penalty imposed. I know from my own experience in Manitoba that automobile theft is at an all-time high, particularly in the city of Winnipeg.

The member said that changing some of the wording of Mr. Cadman's original presentation would prevent any problems being created with respect to autobody shops that have to change or alter the VINs. The first part of Mr. Cadman's bill stated that everyone commits an offence who wholly or partially alters, removes, or obliterates a vehicle identification number on a motor vehicle without lawful excuse. Would an autobody shop that needs to make a necessary change not be covered? Would it not be operating with lawful excuse and therefore not be considered a part of the extension that has been added to this bill?

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, there has been some sincere discussion on this bill. I think everybody in the House in general supports this bill in the spirit of our late colleague whom my colleague opposite knew very well.

I am not a lawyer, although dabbling in politics every now and then it has been a frequent accusation that has been levelled my way. I cannot speak to those specifics. I do think the essence of the difference between Mr. Cadman's bill and this bill is the onus of proof in this case is on the prosecution. That is really the basis of our criminal justice system, that the prosecution has to prove guilt.

This question has been asked a number of times and there has been a lot of discussion about it and I am sure we will hear more about it. I am certainly open to different points of view. This bill addresses what I believe to be the original intent of Mr. Cadman's bill, but it charter-proofs it. It also indicates that the onus of proof needs to be on the prosecution and not on the accused.

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague and as I said off microphone, I think he should thank God that he is not a lawyer.

We have heard a lot of talk in this House in the last year about crime and punishment for crime. I have to say that this particular bill touches me very personally. It is not something I discuss very widely in public, but in my very early teens I was actually involved in joyriding. I have to think of myself at that time and the crimes and the punishments that we are suggesting and what would have happened in those days had penalties of this type been in place.

I would like to point out to my colleague, that I do not have the figures nationally or for the Atlantic provinces, but I do have the figures for Ontario. I have to point out here that the overall crime rate in Ontario reached a historic peak in the early 1990s at the end of the Mulroney era. As far as I can tell, the overall crime rate here has gone down in a most remarkable fashion every single year since.

Violent crimes in Ontario truly did. They reached the highest level on record in 1993, which is the year the Liberal government came into power. The rate has gone down, not every year, but every year except one since. The rate is now at a level which is close to a historic low. The same is true for crimes involving offensive weapons in Ontario. Crimes involving offensive weapons reached a peak in 1994 and have gone down every year since. There are similar figures for homicides.

I assume motor vehicles are property, and for property crimes we see the same thing. We see an all-time high in 1991 and never reached that again. Property crime has gone down to a historic low according to the last figures I have for 2002-03.

By the way, a lot of the lowering of the crimes has had to do with the prosperity we have created. It also has to do with reaching out to poor communities. I know it also has to do with changes to laws and our more restrictive control of guns and things of that type. Given these sorts of figures and given what has happened since 1993 in crime of all sorts, does a lot of the lowering of the crime rates has to do with the mood in our communities?

I know my colleague is very serious about this issue. I would like my colleague to address that aspect of property crime and remember that one of his colleagues did in fact participate in joyrides in his youth.

● (1640)

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his honesty about past misdeeds. I must admit I was not quite as shocked as some might be, having gotten to know him in the past year.

I do think that it speaks to the issue of proportionality when he talks about joyriding versus the issue of organized criminals being involved in tampering, obliterating and violating vehicle identification numbers.

I mentioned my own case of being at home on a January night after my wife and I had just brought our child back from the hospital. He had sustained a small injury. We had parked the car in the garage. Then we woke up at 1:30 a.m. to the sound of the police knocking on our door to tell us that our vehicle had been found some distance away. Our personal experience is all that we could think about at that point in time and about the criminal justice system.

Government Orders

There have been a lot of improvements and the crime rate has in general gone down, as my hon. colleague mentioned. However, it does not in any way reduce the burden of ensuring that we continue to do everything we can. In a small way my family and I suffered a minor inconvenience. In a larger way there are people such as Jason MacCullough of my community who was murdered in 1999 and for whom the community had a walk against violence in his memory last week. Anyone who is a victim of crime is one too many.

We have made some progress in this country, but we are also sensitive to the fact that we must do more to protect Canadians. At the end of the day it is one of the things that they most solemnly look to their government to do on their behalf and we are doing it.

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the government across the way that there are over 170,000 vehicles stolen annually and that is what the bill is addressing. In the member's comments when he was talking about the onus of proof, if I understand it correctly, I would say that Mr. Cadman's bill put the onus on the person charged to explain why he or she had a vehicle with a stolen VIN.

To me that would be the obvious direction we would want to take. I would suggest that having the crown prove that a person caught with a stolen vehicle knows that it was stolen would simply lead to long, prolonged court cases. It would take forever to find out the truth, as opposed to when a person who is charged has to explain why he or she has a stolen vehicle. I would like the member to explain this to the House and to Canadians.

The member opposite wants to talk about process. We know the Liberal process is to delay, delay, delay and then it issues get out of jail free cards to everyone.

I would ask the member opposite if he would like to explain the difference between putting the onus on the person who is charged to defend why he or she has a vehicle with a stolen VIN and why he would want the crown to prove that a person caught with a stolen vehicle must prove that he or she knew that it was stolen?

●(1645)

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the conviction of my colleague across the way, I should remind him that this is a government bill inspired by Mr. Cadman's bill. It is a government bill where the government is taking action to prevent crime, as we are also doing on street racing.

It is our goal as a government to ensure that we take the appropriate precautions to protect Canadians, but there are not many Canadians who would want their government to bring forward a bill that did not respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

An hon. member: It's a Liberal bill.

An hon. member: They kicked him out of their party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I can hardly hear the answers, so I can imagine that the other members in the House cannot.

The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I do not get a chance to take part in question period too often, so I enjoy the opportunity for your intervention.

As I was saying, we do want to protect the rights of Canadians by bringing in justice bills that address the needs of Canadians. We brought one in on street racing and we are bringing this one in. We understand that Canadians need to be protected. We have made many improvements in reducing the crime rate over the last decade and we know that we can do more.

We also know that we are not going to do anything that violates the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I do not think Canadians want us to ignore due process as we go forward in improving this situation so that Canadians can live safely in their homes and on their streets.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the government wanted to do something truly good about protecting citizens, then Chuck Cadman would have been leading debate in the House on his own private member's bill and it would have sought unanimous consent to pass it at all stages so Canadians would have been protected. That would have been a fitting tribute while he was living. That is what it should have done in the House. Instead it brings forward a watered down bill. That is the worst argument I have ever heard over there, that it is somehow doing some on behalf of Canadians to protect them.

I rise on behalf of the people of Essex to speak to Bill C-64. I am here also with thoughts of my former seat mate, Chuck Cadman. I have to be honest, I miss him terribly.

Chuck's brought forward his private member's Bill C-287, on the alteration and obliteration of vehicle identification numbers, because there was no provision for the direct prosecution of a person engaged in the physical act of tampering with a vehicle identification number, a loophole that has been masterfully exploited by organized crime. Instead what we have is Bill C-64, a partial attempt by the Liberal government to address that loophole, which is insufficient.

Also, I am here to talk about what the Liberals have been falsely claiming as a fitting tribute and honour to the late Chuck Cadman, member of Parliament. The only fitting tribute to the memory of Chuck Cadman would be to take his private member's bill, ironically unaltered, and pass it in the House. Instead what we have is the Liberals trying to fulfill a promise they made to Chuck after he gave the government life in that crucial May 19 budget vote.

I was sitting in my seat next to Chuck after that vote. It was interesting to watch the long lineup of Liberal members of Parliament eager to shake Chuck's hand. I thought the most interesting moment of that whole night was when the justice minister was face to face with Chuck. If we can believe it, he looked him in the eyes and said that he did not know why Chuck came to this Parliament, but that he would do something about the issues that were important to him.

It is very interesting that our justice minister did not know that the reason Chuck Cadman came to the House for eight years was because of the death of his son and the fact that the criminal justice system did nothing about it. Shame on the government.

Government Orders

What has the government brought forward instead of bringing Chuck's bill forward and passing? We have a nice little add-on to the bill, and will read it. First I will read the words in Chuck Cadman's bill. It states that every one commits offence who, wholly or partially alters, removes or obliterates a vehicle identification number on a motor vehicle without lawful excuse.

The government decided it wanted to make an ad-on to that. It states, "and under circumstances that give rise to a reasonable inference that the person did so to conceal the identity of the motor vehicle".

That is a substantial change from what Chuck wanted to achieve. Chuck's intention was that we would have a justice system that would get tough on criminals. He was a tireless crusader of rights for victims over the rights of criminals. Chuck's previous private member's bill on the issue put the onus of proof for lawful excuse on the person indicted, on the accused criminal. That tilts the balance in favour of the Crown on behalf of the victims of crime.

What the Liberals have done with Chuck Cadman's idea is change the onus now to put a double onus on the Crown.

● (1650)

It was Chuck Cadman's intention that someone caught with an altered vehicle identification number would have to explain themselves. It is not a great demand to put on somebody who is caught with a vehicle that has an altered VIN. If I were working at a wrecking yard and, as part of the normal process of business, removed a vehicle identification number, I would have a lawful excuse why that vehicle identification number was altered and removed. That would have sufficed under Chuck Cadman's bill. Now, the Crown, on behalf of the victims of crime, has to prove an additional burden that the vehicle identification number was altered or removed to conceal the identity of that vehicle. I can hear the criminal defence lawyers laughing already. Those are the people who the Liberals consulted, between talking to Chuck Cadman and bringing the bill forward.

I was thinking a little about lady justice earlier today. I think we all remember the lady justice symbol of her holding up the two scales, literally weighing the evidence, with a blindfold across her eyes to symbolize her impartiality in the weighing of that evidence.

Under the Liberals there is a new lady justice. Her arms are thrown up in the air in a show of helplessness as criminal after criminal gets soft treatment, or gets day passes to amusement parks or gets house arrest, while victims in our system get re-victimized.

This new lady justice has dropped the scales at her feet because the evidence seems to no longer matter. Witness a lot of the court decisions. The evidence suddenly does not matter any more. This new lady justice still has her blindfold on, not to reflect her impartiality any more but because she needs to shield her eyes from the injustices that are committed. This new lady justice has been brought on by 12 years of Liberals being soft on crime.

Let the numbers speak for themselves. Already this year there have been 64 murders in Toronto, 44 violent crimes committed with guns. The Liberals say that the gun registry that is supposed to protect people. It is their answer to everything, like Kyoto is their answer to everything in the environment. They have a gun registry to

protect everybody. It has not. People are being gunned down in our streets.

James Caza has 42 convictions. He is roaming the interior of British Columbia. I am sure the people in British Columbia feel real safe these days.

Serial rapist Larry Fisher was surprised himself that he was let out of jail so quickly. While out on parole he raped and murdered.

Liberal Senator Larry Campbell wants a soft approach on hard drugs like crystal meth.

Legal counsel from the Liberal government testified before the justice committee that mandatory prison terms for criminals would amount to cruel and unusual punishment.

A parole board handed out day passes to pedophiles to attend children's theme parks. I have four young kids. I will rethink how I spend my summers. Will we go to Canada's Wonderland? I have no idea who will be roaming around there and who will be a threat to my children.

This is wrong. Canadians should not have to restrict their freedom from operating in society because they do not know what criminals are lurking there, criminals that the Liberal justice system has let go.

● (1655)

The Liberal government opposed Bill C-215, a bill sponsored by my Conservative colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings, which proposed mandatory minimum sentences on indictable gun crimes. The bill has gained support from the victims of crimes and from those who enforce the laws in the land, our police. They know the bill makes sense, but the government does not support it.

The Supreme Court of Canada refused to consider the case of Dean Edmondson who was convicted of sexual assault for trying to have sex with a 12 year old girl. Instead of a prison term, he got house arrest.

It brings me to the obvious question. What is the Liberal priority? The Liberals want to solve overcrowding in our prisons. They want to solve our court backlogs, the mountain of cases that have clogged up our courts. They want to do it by making it easier to stay out of jail, even though these people wreak havoc on society. The Liberals want it to be easier to make bail. They want to make it easier for the courts to give the criminal house arrest and to give concurrent rather than consecutive sentences. God forbid if one were convicted of multiple violent crimes that one would have to serve sentence after sentence. Why not get a group discount? That is what the government approves.

The Liberal priority is to make it easier for a Liberal patronage appointee filled parole board to give day passes to fun parks to convicted pedophiles.

Government Orders

With Bill C-64, Liberal so-called justice means to get the handcuffs off the criminal and put them on our crown attorneys instead. That is what the bill proposes to do. Once again the Liberals are siding with the criminals. They are not standing up for victims of crime. They are siding with the criminals and the Liberal defence lawyers who donate to their election campaigns.

I think we all remember that Allan Rock was the Liberal justice minister for a time. He gave us the failed long gun registry on which the government has spent \$2 billion. For what? It is not serving its purpose. It is allowing the criminals to continue wreaking havoc on society. It goes after law-abiding farmers and duck hunters instead.

Allan Rock gave us the Liberal policy of conditional sentencing with no direction to the courts as to which serious violent crimes should be exempted from the concept of conditional sentencing. What is the result? Liberal appointed judges rightly interpret that the Liberal government's desire is to let violent criminals get out of jail free. That is the Liberal priority.

Bill C-2, the Liberals so-called child pornography legislation, is sitting on the Prime Minister's desk. It has the legitimate use defence in it. It used to be called the artistic merit defence. We can dress it up, paint it up or call it whatever, but it is a loophole one could drive a truck through. It leaves our vulnerable children unprotected.

● (1700)

The Liberals voted against raising the age of consent from 14 to 16. That is not much to ask to protect our young adolescents. Instead, the government wants to keep it legal for a 40 or 50 year old man to have sex with a young adolescent.

I think it is clear that the Liberals are soft on crime in general and on vehicle crimes specifically. Our Conservative colleague, my seatmate, had his private member's bill, Bill C-293, a bill I spoke in support of in this House, a bill that proposed mandatory minimum sentences for vehicle theft.

The other so-called Cadman bill, Bill C-65, the companion to this legislation, dealing with street racing, does not honour Chuck. The Liberal government this time left out something very important from that legislation, which was the scale that Mr. Cadman had built into his bill of increasing punishment for repeat offenders. Apparently those who continue to threaten the safety of our communities get a discount for their anti-social choices.

Mr. Cadman was on a crusade for eight years to get tougher on criminals in crimes involving vehicles before his premature demise. During those eight years, seven were under Liberal majority governments, not a minority government like it currently is. The Liberals, if they were serious about vehicle identification number alteration, could have passed Chuck's bill quite easily. They could have rubber-stamped it post-haste. They had majorities for seven years in this House and instead they reserved the right to fast-track things for political pork-barrelling to Liberal cronies and friends. The talk of Liberal concern for Chuck Cadman's crusade is hollow, quite frankly.

The least the Liberals could have done this time around, if they truly wanted to honour Chuck's memory, would have been to bring forward his bill unaltered. I find it a curious irony that we are talking about altering vehicle identification numbers and yet the Liberals

altered the bill of the late Chuck Cadman, an honourable and distinguished man, for their own political purposes. It is a moral crime, a crime against Chuck's memory, to allow the Liberal government to alter a good bill.

The Liberals can talk about Chuck's memory all they want but they are waxing poetic. They did not listen to Chuck Cadman at all. The loophole in Bill C-64 is proof of that. The Liberal government listened instead to Liberal defence lawyers and now defence lawyers and organized criminals will have a great time watching the crown frustratingly try to prosecute under this legislation.

I would contend that the Liberals, with their loophole in Bill C-64, have dishonoured the memory of Chuck Cadman. I do not say that lightly. I sat next to the man for my short time in this House and I spent my time getting to know him. He was one of the most decent men I have ever known, a good family man, a devoted husband and devoted father. He was not planning on being a member of Parliament. That was not his design, but he made it his crusade because he loved his son that much, to come here and ensure we had the laws and the direction to the courts that society wants criminals to be prosecuted to the fullest, that they should pay for their crimes, that Canadians should be protected and that they should not be revictimized in this process. Chuck was here to do that. I can say proudly that Conservatives have always stood for the principles in Chuck Cadman's original private member's bill.

● (1705)

Conservatives will continue standing up for safe streets, for healthy communities and on behalf of victims of crime and say, "No way". The rights of Canadians should be respected in this country.

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have sat in this House for a long time and I have heard good speeches and bad speeches but that sort of fearmongering degrades the House of Commons. I do not think I have ever heard more false morality and more claim to principles in a more rambling, disjointed tirade since I came into this House. It truly is disgraceful. I find it disgraceful that a member so new would sink to those depths in connection with serious legislation and occasionally mention it in the context of Chuck Cadman and enfold Chuck Cadman in his arms. I do not know in what sort of world he lives but he certainly seems to be a very paranoid person.

Government Orders

I have the figures here for crimes committed in the last decade or more for the province of Ontario, my own province. They are not my statistics. I did not invent them and I did not see them in a newspaper. These are the statistics from Statistics Canada.

Our fearmongering friend over there is talking about our children not going to Canada's Wonderland in Ontario out of fear. He knows, or at least he should know, as he is a member of Parliament now and perhaps should remember that from time to time when he is posturing in this particular way, that the overall crime rate in the province of Ontario is at an all-time low. It reached a peak in the early 1990s and has gone down every year since and is now a fraction of what it was before.

This is not to say that there are not serious crimes going on out there. I am simply pointing out, if he looks at the figures, that serious crimes are down perhaps a third of what they were at their peak in the early 1990s when we first came in.

I regret the recent spate of handgun homicides in metropolitan Toronto. It is a terrible thing and it is something we have to deal with but I do not think it has to be dealt with through savage penalties, although they certainly should be the most severe penalties. We need to deal with those communities and do what we can about it. Nevertheless, homicide rates in Ontario reached the world record peak in 1991 and 1992 and have come down virtually every year since. They have gone up very slightly in the last year but they are still a fraction of what they were.

I mentioned property crimes earlier. They, too, are down.

Violent crimes in the province of Ontario, which reached a peak in the years 1991, 1992 and 1993, have come down every year since.

What about offensive weapons crimes. He talked about gun control. It is the same thing. At the beginning of 1994 offensive weapons crimes were at 75 per 100,000 and they are now down to 40 per 100,000 in the province of Ontario.

We should do everything we can to stop every offensive weapons crime. We should work with the communities and punish those involved but we should not go around telling our people and our children that our communities are more dangerous now than they were.

My colleague pretends, in this meandering rhetoric that he has, to having high principles. I represent a rural riding and I have had my problems with the gun registry, as many other people have. However his claim that the gun registry cost \$2 billion is not just a lie, it is a big lie. It is something that absolutely cannot be proven. The cost of the gun registry is nothing like \$2 billion. It is not even \$1 billion. It is not even over \$100 million.

• (1710)

Good gun control costs money over a period of 10 years. The registry costs nothing like that. I support expenditures on gun control in Canada so we can continue to bring crime rates down.

Our colleague should apologize for putting fear into the hearts of Ontario families and children by imagining a level of crime that simply does not exist.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for taking six minutes out of the ten minute question and comment period. If he wanted to give a speech he should have waited his turn.

Hon. Peter Adams: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is there any reason that I should not take six minutes out of a ten minute question and comment period?

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): I would like to inform the member that this is questions and comments. He can ask questions or make a comment and it is within the 10 minute purview.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Madam Speaker, I was just making a factual statement that six out of ten minutes were wasted on that question.

I do not need lectures on fearmongering from a Liberal government that has made election campaigns on fearmongering. Those members have made their reputation on that and that is what they have made their government on.

I have talked with senior citizens who are afraid to come out of their homes. He can quote any statistic he wants but the reality is that our senior citizens are afraid to come out of their homes at night and even in the daytime. Some of them are even afraid to stay in their homes because young people are breaking in and tying them up. It is happening in my communities. I am not here perpetuating some strange fearmongering. These people are afraid to come out of their homes. I have talked with young women who are afraid to walk the streets after dark.

He can quote whatever statistic he wants but the only reason crime is going down in this country is because of the demographic shift. The population is aging. Crime has not gone down as a result of Liberal policies to get tough on criminals. People are afraid to report crimes. What is the purpose of reporting a crime if the criminal is not going to do the time?

That is the kind of culture that is happening in our communities and the culture I am reflecting here when I talk about what is going on. The Liberals are soft on crime. They have had 12 years to solve this issue and a lot of other criminal justice issues but they have chosen not to and now they want to pontificate here. They want to come off like they are big shots but that does not wash with real people living in our real communities. The Liberals are living in a different Ottawa and in a different Canada than the people I have been talking about.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the speech made by the hon. member for Essex, particularly where he talked about Chuck Cadman. I was Mr. Cadman's neighbour and we were even seatmates. The hon. member is right. I found it shameful to see what the Liberals did after the vote. Before the vote, they had not talked to him, they had not even saluted him, they had not even seen him when he would come and sit here. But after the vote, they came to see him crawling on all fours. They shook hands with him with a big smile on their faces. What a despicable display of subservience. I saw it, I was there. Mr. Cadman was shaking. They were all happy. Then, we left and it was over. So, the hon. member is right on this. It was shameful on the part of the Liberals.

Government Orders

I want to ask the hon. member if this bill reflects Mr. Cadman's memory, if it reflects the spirit of his legislation.

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson: Madam Speaker, the bill does not embody the spirit of what Chuck Cadman was trying to do on this particular issue. It is a very different bill in a very significant way. The bill tilts the balance away from protecting the victims of crime and shifts it on to protecting those who perpetrate crime and who create victims in this country. That is not what Mr. Cadman intended. He was a tireless crusader on behalf of the victims of crime, not only in his community but coast to coast to coast.

If the Liberals really wanted to honour Mr. Cadman they simply would have reintroduced his private member's bill, left it alone and passed it in the House. We would have supported that bill in a heartbeat, as, I am sure would have other parties in honour of Chuck. The bill would have gone through the House and we could have had action on this issue instead of all the phoney rhetoric from that side of the House and the phoney promises from the government.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to speak to Bill C-64, an act to amend the Criminal Code on vehicle identification numbers.

Auto theft is a Canadian problem. According to estimates, over 170,000 cars are stolen each and every year. The costs are also enormous, with auto theft costing Canadians over \$600 million. Auto theft ends up costing everyone high insurance rates and facilitates other crimes such as illicit drug trafficking. As well, some people inadvertently buy stolen property, which ends up costing unsuspecting victims money.

Auto theft ends up empowering criminal organizations. Cars are cheap to steal and in British Columbia they are easy to transport because of our close proximity to the American border and the Vancouver port.

Criminal organizations are drawn to auto theft because of the enormous profit potential and the relatively low risk of detection. This is clearly a booming industry and the government needs to act before it gets even worse.

Auto theft does not just result in property loss. Vehicle theft contributes to over 56 deaths a year in Canada. In Surrey, the police videotaped one car thief in a bait car. The driver was on crystal meth, a drug the government continues to not take seriously despite the ruined lives.

This driver exhibited erratic and wild behaviour. He was screaming, flailing his arms and clearly not paying any attention to the road. He put his life and the lives of Surrey residents in danger. We are blessed that such a man did not kill anyone on the road that day. Unfortunately, 56 Canadians were not so lucky and paid the ultimate price as a result of vehicle theft.

Chuck Cadman originally decided to combat auto crime with his two private members' bills. It is too bad the Liberals do not.

Auto theft is a major problem in my riding of Fleetwood—Port Kells. Surrey has had the unfortunate title of being the auto theft capital of North America. Over 8,000 vehicles were stolen in 2003

alone. That is almost one in 50 people in Surrey who have a car stolen per year. At this rate, everyone in Surrey will have their car stolen once in their lifetime. While much work has been done by local and provincial governments to curb auto theft in Surrey, the federal government has lagged on this issue.

In Surrey, municipal and provincial governments instituted the bait program. Bait operates throughout the greater Vancouver area and has been credited with lowering auto crime in the lower mainland. Police officers, like the name suggests, bait criminals with cars that can be easily stolen. The police then arrest the car thieves by electronically shutting off the engines when the cars are at low speed or at a stop light.

In Victoria, the program has had great success, lowering auto theft by almost 36%. In Surrey, the program is credited to lowering auto theft by 13%. I would like to congratulate Surrey and the lower mainland cities for their own aggressive actions against car thieves. The same congratulations cannot be given to the federal government. It has been soft on auto crime and it continues to be so.

Currently, there is no law that makes altering, removing or destroying vehicle identification numbers illegal. This bill supposedly seeks to fill that legal void, but for reasons I will shortly explain does not. Bill C-64 is another one of the sham Cadman bills. Along with Bill C-65, today's bill is an insult to the legacy of Chuck Cadman. The Liberals did not support Mr. Cadman's private member's legislation when he was in the House as a Reform, Canadian Alliance and Conservative member. They have now cynically brought back legislation that may be similar in appearance but not similar in effect.

The Liberals in the past have tried to paint him as cruel and unsophisticated on the issue, saying that we need nuance in the law. Chuck understood the victims and understood criminals. Repeat offenders do not deserve the legal system's mercy. They deserve jail, so that good Canadians are not subjected to violent criminal actions.

● (1720)

Bill C-64 seeks to make it a criminal offence to alter or destroy vehicle identification numbers. Vehicle identification numbers are serial numbers placed throughout a car to identify it. It is a kind of car genetic code. Insurers and police use vehicle identification numbers to track cars that have been stolen and also to prevent stolen cars from being sold on the black market.

The idea behind vehicle identification numbers was to prevent thieves from easily reselling stolen property. Because vehicle identification numbers had to be registered with insurance companies, they could be cross-referenced with stolen vehicles. This essentially made it very difficult to resell stolen merchandise with the original vehicle identification number.

However, by altering or destroying vehicle identification numbers, thieves have found a way around the practice. It also makes stolen cars easier to transport across borders and through ports. Vehicle identification numbers would be effective if they were not easily destroyed.

Government Orders

In Chuck's original bill it read: "Every one commits an offence who, wholly or partially, alters, removes or obliterates a vehicle identification number on a motor vehicle without lawful excuse". However, the Liberals have now amended that clause to read: "— and under circumstances that give rise to a reasonable inference that the person did so to conceal the identity of the motor vehicle".

The Liberal amendment adds an additional burden of proof on prosecutors and law enforcement. Thanks to liberal judges, such clauses are routinely interpreted to establish a burden of proof on the prosecutor and have been used so in other circumstances.

We must be clear with what type of criminality we are dealing. We are not simply dealing with joyriding teenagers which is also problematic. Rather, we are dealing with sophisticated criminal organizations who know how to avoid the law at all costs. To think that criminal organizations and their lawyers will not exploit this loophole is naive at best.

Criminal organizations are becoming a problem all across Canada. Increasingly, they are also developing ties to international terrorist organizations. The nexus of crime, drugs and terrorism is seen in places like Afghanistan. To combat these groups we need tough laws that will actually act as a deterrent. Bill C-64 will not act as a deterrent. It will be very difficult to actually prosecute people under this law. Without jail time staring them in the face, these criminals will not be deterred.

I have grave issues with the Liberal amendment to Chuck's bill. It will undoubtedly prevent prosecutors from actually using the law. The high burdens of proof contained will provide an easy loophole for criminals, criminal organizations and their lawyers to exploit. Let us send a message to the criminals. Let us vote for Chuck's bills, not these Liberal fakes.

I am hoping that members from all parties will join with us in the Conservative Party in amending these bills to reflect Chuck's intentions. In that way members of the House can honour the true legacy of Chuck Cadman. The residents of Surrey, including those in my riding of Fleetwood—Port Kells, demand nothing less.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take part in this debate.

We are in favour of Bill C-64, which amends the Criminal Code by creating the offence of altering, obliterating or removing a vehicle identification number. There was no such provision in the Criminal Code before. The bill now includes these offences, as follows:

Every one who commits an offence under subsection (1):

(a) is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years

(b) is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction.

We feel this bill represents a step forward by providing some means to combat this problem of auto theft, which exists all over the world. In 2004, nearly 170,000 vehicle thefts were reported in Canada.

My Conservative colleague who has just spoken feels that these sentences seem inadequate. I would like to hear what sort of sentences she would like to see in a bill like this.

Several speakers have indicated that this bill was not along the lines of what Mr. Cadman would have wanted. What teeth could we have added to improve it. Perhaps she could go into more detail on this.

[*English*]

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Madam Speaker, my community is known as the auto theft capital of North America. This is not something nice to boast about. What a shame. Every day 16 cars are stolen, approximately 6,000 cars a year. Seven people have died in B.C. as a result of auto theft. It costs Surrey drivers \$30 million a year in insurance.

The police try their best to stop these thefts. They lack the resources to get the job done. The police are also hindered by a justice system that treats car thieves with kid gloves. Car thieves receive no real punishment as 90% of car thieves are repeat offenders.

We need laws with teeth to put a stop to this sort of crime. The Liberal government has been in office for 12 long years and nothing has been done. Bill C-64 is a baby step forward and nothing has been done. The Criminal Code needs to be strengthened to include mandatory minimum sentences for repeat offenders.

• (1730)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Newton—North Delta to participate in the debate on Bill C-64, an act to amend the Criminal Code with respect to vehicle identification numbers.

Bill C-64 would make it a criminal offence to alter, remove or obliterate the vehicle identification number, commonly known as a VIN, on a motor vehicle. The current Criminal Code has no offence that deals specifically with VIN tampering. However, under section 352.2 of the Criminal Code, a tampered with VIN can be proof of property obtained by crime.

Auto theft in B.C. is epidemic. As the member who spoke before me mentioned, we had 37,500 vehicles stolen last year. The RCMP has labeled Surrey, British Columbia, the car theft capital of North America. On a per capita basis, more automobiles are stolen in Surrey than in any other North American city, more than Toronto, more than Los Angeles, and even more than New York City.

Over 6,000 cars are stolen each year in the communities in Surrey. Sixteen cars will be stolen by the end of any given day. Since the time we began speaking on this bill today, some cars have probably already been stolen in Surrey.

Local newspapers jokingly refer to car theft as Surrey's fastest growing industry, but it is no joking matter. Almost all the vehicles stolen are used to commit other crimes.

Government Orders

Stealing a vehicle is one thing, but the thieves then involve that vehicle in other crimes or sometimes in joyriding, often with fatal consequences. So far this year seven people have died in British Columbia as a result of auto theft.

The Insurance Corporation of British Columbia estimates that auto offences cost Surrey drivers \$13 million annually.

The RCMP claims that it has done all it can to stop car thieves and now it is up to the courts. We have a court system that is a revolving door. The car thieves take advantage of our weak laws, our laws without teeth, and of the loopholes that exist within the system.

The courts refuse to treat auto theft as a serious crime. The RCMP auto theft task force complains that thieves receive virtually no punishment but a slap on the wrist. In fact, when the punishment is not severe, that becomes a motivation to commit the same crime again. There is no deterrent in place.

Meanwhile, the same individuals are arrested over and over again. One man arrested last summer in Surrey was already facing seven separate trials for auto theft. Another thief was pulled over while driving a stolen car to his court hearing on auto theft charges; he was going to court on auto theft charges and he stole a car to get there. In fact, once a thief stole a car and another thief stole his stolen car.

• (1735)

This crime is so rampant that about half of the 13,000 cases handled by Surrey provincial court last year involved car theft. Ninety per cent involved repeat offenders.

Most car thieves are supporting drug addictions. This was graphically displayed earlier this year when an RCMP bait car equipped with a surveillance camera caught a Surrey car thief on film. The thief was high on crystal meth, which is a serious problem in Surrey. According to a survey, 10% of school students under the age of 18 have used crystal meth. The government is sitting on its hands doing nothing to prevent it or stop it.

The thief, high on crystal meth and waving a gun, sped through our city streets. The image was later seen on news broadcasts across the country.

My former colleague and neighbour in Surrey, member of Parliament Chuck Cadman, sought to address auto theft and assist police by introducing Bill C-413 in March 2003.

He reintroduced his private member's bill in February 2004 and then again in November 2004, as Bill C-287. These two bills, neither of which moved beyond first reading, sought to make it a criminal offence to tamper with vehicle identification numbers.

Now, in introducing Bill C-64, the justice minister invokes the name of Mr. Cadman, saying that the bill is intended as an appropriate tribute to his legacy.

I would like to mention what happens when private members' bills are introduced. Of course we have made some progress in the House, in that at least one private member's bill or motion is votable in the House, but during the days when I was a member of Parliament representing the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance, when a good idea used to come from a private member, the government

would completely mitigate it, reducing the volume, criticize it and oppose it vigorously.

Then, after opposing it, the Liberals sometimes had the audacity to reintroduce the bill if they thought was a good idea. The Liberals have stolen many of my bills, including those on foreign credentials, protection for firefighters and whistleblower legislation. They opposed the bills, but when we continued to raise our voices they stole the bills.

In this case, the government opposed the bill, which they now try to own on their own terms. First they criticize and oppose and then they steal the bill, mess it up and reintroduce it.

However, there are two major differences between Mr. Cadman's bills and the government bill. Bill C-413 and Bill C-287 put the onus on the person charged to explain why he has a vehicle with a stolen vehicle identification number. In contrast, Bill C-64 requires the Crown to prove that a person caught with a stolen vehicle knows that it was stolen.

Bill C-413 and Bill C-287 amended section 402 of the Criminal Code, which deals with fraudulent transactions. In contrast, Bill C-64 amends section 377 of the code, which deals with property offences. It is the same section which now indirectly covers vehicle identification number tampering.

Like Bill C-65, the proposed legislation is a watered down version of Mr. Cadman's initial proposal. In order to better reflect Mr. Cadman's initial desire to create a useful tool for our law enforcement agencies to tackle auto theft and organized crime, the legislation should remove part of subsection 377.1(1) so that the onus is placed on the people caught with an altered vehicle identification number to explain themselves, as was the original intention of Chuck Cadman.

• (1740)

While the Insurance Bureau of Canada is pleased that the government is finally moving on vehicle registration numbers, it is seeking specific amendments to the Criminal Code that would impose tougher penalties for auto theft, including mandatory minimum prison sentences, to send an even stronger message that auto theft is treated more seriously than property crime.

According to an Insurance Bureau spokesperson:

Right now, auto theft is seen by criminal organizations as a relatively low-risk, high-profit activity to raise funds for additional activities. Far from being a victimless crime, auto theft is an inherently violent criminal offence that has a devastating impact in communities right across the country in terms of fatalities and injuries, not to mention the cost to insurance policyholders. The evidence of the impact of auto theft is clear.

Statistics from the Insurance Bureau show that the rate of car theft is 64% higher than it was a decade ago. I do not know how the Liberals can stand there and say the crime rate is falling. Either they do not know the figures, they are manipulating them or the calculations are done differently over there. Statistics from the Insurance Bureau show that the rate of car theft is 64% higher than it was a decade ago.

Government Orders

While the rate of recovery of stolen vehicles in the early 1990s was 95%, today it sits at 60%. The decline in the recovery rate can be attributed to the proliferation of organized vehicle theft.

Organized criminal groups make a profit by exporting stolen vehicles to foreign countries or selling their parts. Because the parts of a car are sometimes worth more collectively than an intact car, many stolen cars are delivered to chop shops. These shops specialize in stripping cars, disposing of identifiable parts and selling others through a national network. Chop shops can meet the demands for parts more quickly and typically more cheaply than legitimate parts dealers.

Like the most recent trend in human identity theft involving frauds such as credit card fraud, bank fraud or other financial frauds, the trend is the same in auto identity theft. A VIN is just like DNA, but the thieves can remove it skilfully.

It is hard work. Thieves know that the vehicle identification number is unique and different on every car. First, they copy the vehicle identification number from the Internet, from car dealerships or from cars in malls or junkyards. They make perfect duplicates of the vehicle identification number plates and paperwork. Finally, they steal a similar car and replace its VIN with the copied one. Now the car has been cloned. The stolen car can no longer be identified as stolen; it has a new identity. This crime is highly profitable and very low risk and the chance of getting caught is slim to none.

Experts estimate that there are currently about 50,000 cloned cars in North America, but the number is growing by leaps and bounds. This type of crime only further emphasizes the need for a vehicle identification number tampering law.

I will conclude by saying that it is time this Liberal government did something about auto theft. The Conservatives have consistently supported the efforts of Chuck Cadman in tackling this issue by supporting him on this bill. The Liberals, on the other hand, did not support his bills when he was a caucus member of the Reform Party, the Canadian Alliance or the Conservative Party. They only decided to support the legislation after Mr. Cadman voted to save the Liberal government in the confidence vote on May 19 of this year.

● (1745)

My riding is next to the Surrey North constituency. My constituents are mad. They are very upset that the Liberals are trying to gain politically by using Chuck Cadman's name while watering down his legislation. If the Liberals really wanted to honour Chuck Cadman or his legacy, they should have introduced the bill with the same wording and with the same intent that Mr. Cadman had in mind.

I have a friend, Dane Minor, who was a very close friend of Chuck Cadman and is still a good friend of the Cadman family. He worked with Chuck from the beginning when Chuck helped to found CRY. He had known Chuck for a long time and knew him well. He said in a letter, and I do not have a copy of his letter with me, that he was encouraged when he first saw that the Liberals were reintroducing Chuck's bill in the House, but when he saw the content of the bill, he said that he was mad as hell. He is disappointed that the Liberals are using Chuck's name on a watered down version of the bill.

Legislation making it a criminal offence to tamper with a vehicle identification number could provide law enforcement with another tool to use in its battle against auto theft. It would also serve as a deterrent to criminals. Other countries have had similar legislation in place for years. It is about time that we did the same, but in the right way.

Bill C-64 is not as good as the private member's bill on which it is modelled. I recommend that it be amended suitably. If it is, the bill should help tackle organized crime and auto theft by giving enforcement agencies another tool.

I used to be a member of the subcommittee on organized crime. I had the opportunity to have lots of meetings with the Vancouver Port Authority, the RCMP, the border patrol and many other law enforcement agencies. They told the subcommittee that organized crime is on the increase to the extent that if they have 10 leads on different organized crimes, they do not have enforcers to even follow up with one of those leads.

The criminals have state of the art technology, whereas our law enforcement agencies are struggling to maintain their old equipment, thanks to the cuts made by the Liberal government.

We have to give our law enforcement agencies the tools, resources, manpower and the equipment so that they are light years ahead of the organized criminals. Unfortunately, they are light years behind the state of the art technology that organized criminals are using. Whether it is a marijuana grow op, crystal meth, ecstasy or any kind of drugs that infiltrate the younger society, the government has absolutely no control over it. The hands of the law enforcement agencies are tied. As my colleague mentioned, the Liberals have taken the handcuffs from the criminals and put them on the hands of the judges.

I urge the House that until the bill is amended, we should look into it and make every effort to make it strong. Again, the Liberals should use the original bill the way it was designed if they really want to honour the legacy. Otherwise they should stop using the name of Chuck Cadman.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to the hon. member for Newton—North Delta and I wonder how he might be perceived in his riding. To hear him talk about Surrey, where he lives, you would be afraid to open your mouth for fear of having your dentures stolen, what with all the thefts that occur there.

Government Orders

I see that this party takes an extremely tough stance on a young offender, or non offender, who might take a car he needs, for just a few dollars, without considering the consequences. Should we cut off just the hand he put on the steering wheel, or both hands? Should we cut off the foot that he on pressed the accelerator? Will the Conservative Party go so far as to penalize the young people instead of helping them understand? That is my question for the hon. member. Personally, I had hoped to travel as a tourist to that part of the country, but I might rethink my plans and look into it some more.

[English]

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Madam Speaker, the situation in British Columbia's Lower Mainland is very serious, whether it is with respect to marijuana grow ops or needle exchange programs.

At one time the Lower Mainland of British Columbia used to have the highest consumption on a per capita basis of needle exchanges in North America. The recent problem of crystal meth is now an epidemic. Liberal hack Senator Larry Campbell may deny it, but the problem is serious. In a secondary school 10% of the students are using crystal meth. This is an absolutely dangerous situation.

When it comes to auto theft, 13-year-old kids are stealing cars and going on joyrides. They are speeding at over 100 kilometres an hour on the residential streets of Surrey. These are serious matters.

I would say to the hon. member that one strong reason that comes to my mind is that our judicial system is not working in favour of controlling crime. It is not handing out appropriate punishments. The judicial system does not put a deterrent in place so that criminals do not commit crimes.

In fact, there is a motivation to commit crime when the punishment is only a slap on the wrist. The revolving door system with repeat offenders continues. They are taking advantage of the system. It must stop.

We are the lawmakers in this country. The official opposition has made many amendments to different pieces of legislation in order to have minimum mandatory prison sentences in place. The government is only fooling itself and Canadians by increasing the maximum penalties from five years to 10 years, but that five years or 10 years is never actually handed down to any criminal.

We must make a law that has some teeth in it. Then we have to address the other elements involved, such as increasing the resources available to the law enforcement agencies. The police forces are frustrated.

Early one winter morning a police officer who was on night duty came to my office to drop off a letter. He saw me inside the office so he came in and said to me, "I am so upset. I was on a night shift and we arrested a 16-year-old drug dealer who had been selling drugs on the street. He went before the court. The next day he was back on the street selling drugs again. I arrested him again. After the court hearing he was back on the street selling drugs again. I had to turn the other way because I could not face that 16 year old selling drugs on the street the third day". That is the situation. That is why our law enforcement personnel are frustrated.

In a nutshell, the bottom line is we have to have tougher penalties. Police forces must have sufficient resources. There should be a deterrent in place rather than a motivation to commit crime.

• (1755)

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member discuss some of the issues in the bill. I know from listening to the comments particularly from the other side that there is a desire by the government to portray this as a Chuck Cadman bill.

Being new here last year, I cannot say that I knew Chuck Cadman, but I certainly had met him. Everyone that I have spoken to has talked about Chuck Cadman, his virtues, his strengths and his desire to see justice served to people who have committed crimes against people. He was tired of the revolving door policies of the justice system that we currently have of, as the member said, catching and releasing, catching and releasing, catching and releasing.

I am wondering if the member could tell the House and Canadians how he thinks Chuck Cadman with whom he had worked closely would have perceived this type of bill with the changes that have been made.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Madam Speaker, it is hard to imagine. Mr. Cadman was a crusader of criminal justice system reforms under the Young Offenders Act, street car racing, vehicle identification numbers and many other issues which he brought to the floor of the House. He came up with two bills, which we are now debating as government bills, Bill C-64 and Bill C-65.

On the vehicle identification numbers he came up with Bill C-413 and then reintroduced it a couple of times in the form of Bill C-287. Why did the Liberals oppose those bills? The subject matter was there. They were effective bills. A person who had experience in and passion for the criminal justice system reforms drafted those bills. However, the government opposed those bills, but after the confidence vote on May 19 suddenly it became evident to the Liberals that they should come on board and support the bills.

I sincerely doubt the intention of the government. It has no integrity when it comes to its track record on these issues. When my late colleague came up with the bill, the government opposed it. Now it suddenly wants to support it. There is some sort of a catch. I cannot understand what that catch is, but my senses tell me that the Liberals are after political opportunism. There may be a byelection in that riding very soon.

If the Liberals were really sincere about honouring the legacy that Mr. Cadman left behind, they would adopt the bill as it was written by Mr. Cadman. Rather, they are only using the name and the shell, but they have changed the content and have completely watered it down.

I can only imagine from talking to Dane Minor who was a close friend of Chuck Cadman. I worked with Chuck Cadman for almost eight years in the House. We shared so many things together during our campaigns. In our ridings we had joint town hall meetings on crime and other issues.

Government Orders

I could say that he would be disappointed. I am very sure he would have voted against Bills C-64 and C-65 as written by the Liberals.

• (1800)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-64, a bill designed to amend the Criminal Code with respect to vehicle identification numbers.

While I can agree in part with the spirit of the proposed legislation, like many Liberal bills that I have seen over the course of the last year, I cannot support the legislation as written. As we have seen countless times, the spirit may be strong but the devil is in the details. It always seems that when the Liberals put forward legislation, they either water it down to make the original intent almost worthless or they alter it to a point where I think most Canadians cannot accept it. I wish I knew the reason why they do this.

Had the legislation been presented in the form that it was originally presented in as a private member's bill, I would support it. I think most of the members of my party and most Canadians would support it. However, that is not the way the legislation has been written.

Mr. Chuck Cadman originally put forward a private member's bill to deal with this issue and this bill does not reflect his intent. I find it offensive to hear the justice minister say that this bill has been presented in memory of Mr. Chuck Cadman. It diminishes his memory.

Chuck Cadman would not want a bill that is written this way to be presented before the House, and that is quite clear. Any member who purports the bill to be a Chuck Cadman bill is being more than just slightly disingenuous. This is not the type of bill he would support himself if he were with us today.

I want to speak for a few moments on Mr. Cadman himself. I respected him so much for what he did. We all know the history. Any Canadian who has passing knowledge or interest in Canadian politics knows the story of Chuck Cadman and the tragedy he encountered when his 16 year old son was killed in a vicious attack. Rather than going into a shell and becoming a recluse, he decided to become an advocate for and a tireless worker on behalf of victims across Canada. After working in that regard in British Columbia, he decided to seek public office and was successful in his attempt.

Until the time he died, Mr. Chuck Cadman never for one moment forgot the reason he came to this place, and that was to advance the cause of victims' rights across Canada. It was to address issues of crime and law and order in a positive and meaningful way by bringing forward legislation that would hopefully put an end to the type of violence that Chuck Cadman experienced in his life. He would never have agreed with the wording contained in Bill C-64.

I did not have the honour and the privilege of knowing Chuck Cadman. I had the honour of shaking his hand once and introducing myself but that was the extent of it. I certainly will not purport to say that I knew him or that I was a friend of his because I was not. I respected him as a man and as a legislator.

If we are going to say that we are honouring Chuck Cadman's memory by bringing forward legislation, then we should do so in a way that is respectful to his memory. In my view this legislation is anything but respectful of the late Chuck Cadman. It does not accurately reflect what he would have us do.

• (1805)

Quite frankly, when it came to this bill, Chuck Cadman would have been ashamed to allow his name to be associated with it. Let us back up a moment and talk about what he tried to do in his private members' bills with respect to vehicle identification numbers.

Mr. Cadman quite simply stated that it should be a crime for anyone to obscure, alter or deface a vehicle identification number, bottom line, full stop. If people do that, they are guilty of a crime and should be punished accordingly. I cannot think of anything that is simpler or more direct than that. Mr. Cadman was correct that it should be a crime. Currently, it is not.

If a person is caught in possession of a vehicle that has its vehicle identification number altered, defaced or destroyed, that person can be charged with a crime. However, the sheer act of defacing or destroying a VIN currently is not a crime. Mr. Cadman sought to redress that. He sought to put a bill into place that would make the alteration, destruction or tampering of a vehicle identification number a crime.

What did the government do? Again the devil is always in the details. The government does not seem to get it when it comes to taking a private member's bill that made perfect sense, redrafting it in the same language of that bill and then presenting it to the House. It seems incapable of doing that, and I do not understand why.

What it has done with this legislation is, first, add a caveat that states that if there are circumstances that come into play that might make it okay, then perhaps there is no crime. Second, it puts the onus on the Crown. In other words, Mr. Cadman said that if someone destroyed or defaced a VIN, that person would be guilty and would have to prove otherwise. That individual would have to go to court and convince the judge that there was a lawful excuse why he or she did that.

It seems the Liberals have it all backward. They suggest that the crown prosecutors have to prove a person who defaced a VIN did not have a lawful excuse and is guilty. That is completely backward.

What Mr. Cadman attempted to do in all his private members' bills was to put the onus on the individual. If individuals were caught tampering with a VIN, those individuals would have to prove that they had a lawful excuse to do it. If they could not, they would be guilty.

I do not think we could have anything more direct, to the point or simple as that. Yet the government sought to change that intent. It sought to make not the individual who tampered with the VIN prove why he or she did so. This legislation says that the Crown has to prove it, and it has loopholes. It allows individuals to come up with perhaps a convoluted message that might prevent the Crown from successfully prosecuting its case. Why in the world would any government or political party want to water down a bill to that extent? It is beyond me.

Government Orders

For the Liberals to bring forward Bill C-64 in this form and suggest this is something that Chuck Cadman would support, is utterly and entirely wrong. Not only is it disrespectful of Mr. Cadman's memory, but it borders on being untruthful.

•(1810)

Earlier in my remarks I said that at best the Liberals could be considered disingenuous in their remarks. If the Liberals truly wanted to bring forward legislation, they would have simply picked up a copy of Chuck Cadman's earlier private member's bill, replicated the language and presented it. They could take credit for it. I know Mr. Cadman would not have a problem with that. He was a man without ego. He did not look for personal self-glorification, saying that he had a private member's bill, brought it forward and his name would go down in history. In my view he did not care about all that. All he wanted were results. Yet the government cannot even present the results that Mr. Cadman so tirelessly worked for, for many years. That is absolutely a shame.

Although I do not know this to be true, I would suspect very strongly that if one would ask Mr. Cadman's widow, Donna Cadman, if she would support this bill, she would say no. I also suspect that in the upcoming days and perhaps weeks, Donna Cadman will speak out against the bill. There will be no better proof than that as to why the government is wrong in its attempts to portray this bill as a Chuck Cadman bill. We will see what we will see.

I cannot suggest that this is something unique, that this is something at which the government has failed. There is a consistent pattern of the government on issues of crime, particularly motor vehicle theft. There is a continuing pattern where the government has failed to understand the realities of what is needed in terms of law and order, crime and punishment.

I will give a further example of what I speak. Recently, in the last few months, one of our colleagues, the hon. member for Langley, introduced a private member's bill that would increase the penalties of those individuals who stole cars. The bill sets out severe penalties for the first, second and third time offences for individuals who have stolen motor vehicles. From my perspective, as the member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, I heartily endorsed that bill.

In the capital city of Saskatchewan, which is part of my riding, Regina has been known in years past as the national stolen car capital of Canada, on a per capita basis at least. We have a terrible problem with car thefts in Regina. We have had gangs that had monikers and reputations as being car thieves. For those from Saskatchewan, the infamous Oldsmobile gang is one that I would draw to the attention of members of the House. They would steal nothing but Oldsmobiles. To them it was perhaps a badge of honour. We consistently saw youth offenders primarily steal time and time again motor vehicles from the city. Sometimes they were for joyrides. Other times they were stolen to perpetrate more insidious and serious crimes such as drug trafficking and that type of thing. In all cases, the number of thefts of motor vehicles in Regina was absolutely staggering.

The member for Langley brought forward a bill that would put severe penalties and deterrents upon those individuals who might be willing to or thinking of stealing a motor vehicle. If memory serves me well, and perhaps some of my hon. colleagues can refresh my

memory in case I am wrong, the penalty for the first time was up to a maximum of \$1,000 or a year in jail, or both, as determined by the judge. The second offence was more serious. I think it was \$5,000 and up to two years and a third offence, perhaps \$10,000, et cetera.

•(1815)

The Liberal government voted against the legislation. Did the Liberals bring forward any alternative legislation? No. When the justice minister talked about the bill the only thing I can remember is that he related it back to another issue that members on this side have, which is with mandatory minimum sentencing. The justice minister consistently said that mandatory minimums did not work because statistics and empirical evidence suggest that the judges will always go to the lesser amount as indicated on the mandatory minimums. They will not increase the sentencing. He said that was wrong and that they did not want that. The problem is that right now the sentences do not even reach the level of mandatory minimums that we were suggesting.

How in the world can the justice minister say that empirical evidence suggests that mandatory minimum sentencing does not work when in fact the sentences that are currently being given out are less than what we would suggest as the mandatory minimum? It makes no sense to me and yet we have a government that continually says one thing and does another. It says that it is tough on crime and yet I have seen no evidence from the government that would suggest it actually wants to get tough on crime.

Bill C-64 is another example. We had a private member's bill sponsored by Mr. Cadman that would have been direct, effective and would have acted as a deterrent and should have been supported by all members of the House but what did we see? Time and time again, when Mr. Cadman wanted to bring forward legislation such as this, members on that side of the House voted against it.

We have heard the government on different issues say that the reason it will not support certain things is that it wants to bring forward its own legislation, a government initiative, that will make the bill stronger, better worded and more effective. However, time and time again, when we do see legislation brought down by the government, it is not complementary legislation. It is not legislation that accurately reflects the intent of the private member's bill. It is something that is weakened, watered down and does absolutely nothing to accurately reflect the intent of the original bill. This is what is happening with Bill C-64.

Chuck Cadman would have voted against this legislation, not because he was soft on crime, far from it. We all know his record and his background. He would vote against this legislation as introduced by the government because it does not reflect his private member's bill. However we heard the justice minister stand in his place and say that this was in honour and in memory of Chuck Cadman.

Government Orders

I cannot think of anything more offensive than a member of Parliament trying to say that his government is honouring the memory of one of our fallen colleagues, a man who was so widely respected that after losing the nomination in his home riding as a Reform member, he ran as an independent and won overwhelmingly with, I believe, a larger plurality than he had received in the previous election. For an independent to win with that margin of victory in parliamentary circles is unheard of. That is the level of respect people had for Chuck Cadman. The Liberals are sullyng his reputation and for that they should be ashamed.

● (1820)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is certain that we, as a party, will support this bill since it is an improvement over what already exists. What I do not understand is this insistence on oppressing minors or young offenders. Oppression has never succeeded anywhere.

Take for example the oldest occupation in the world. All sorts of laws have been passed to try to eliminate it. Where the impact has successfully been diminished today are places that have laws to protect prostitutes and help them work better and in a very specific environment.

Does the hon. member really believe that imposing a very severe criminal penalty on a minor or a young adult will get rid of this problem? Does he not believe this will instead send the young person to prison, where he will refine his methods and end up doing even more damage? Would it not be better to address the problem more specifically and make the punishment fit the crime?

[*English*]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Madam Speaker, I was a little confused at the start of my hon. colleague's question as to how the Constitution got into this debate but I think I understand the point the hon. member was trying to make.

I must tell the hon. member that I am a big believer in deterrents which is why I think the bill could be effective. It is not so much what happens after a criminal is apprehended and perhaps sent to jail. What we must question is whether the crime could have been prevented to begin with. I think the best answer to crime prevention is having a system of criminal law that would deter individuals from committing a crime.

Bills, such as the one Mr. Cadman was purporting and bills my colleague from Langley was sponsoring, that would put severe penalties on individuals for committing crimes, whether it be the theft of a motor vehicle or the defacing or removal of VINs, would be effective law-making in my view. I believe that if laws like this came into effect in Canada and more young offenders understood the penalties they would be facing, they would think twice before they committed such acts.

What we really want to get at in all of the legislation that we bring forward in this place is legislation that would not only be effective after the fact but legislation that would act as a deterrent before the fact. That is what I am looking for in any legislation that deals with crime and law and order issues. This does not effectively deal with that.

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I commend my hon. colleague for his exposition of this bill but I think there is another dimension to Chuck Cadman that I would like to ask the member to perhaps address.

I knew Chuck from the day he was first elected to the House. In fact, I had the opportunity to follow Chuck Cadman to a public meeting shortly after his son had been murdered. It was quite an experience because Chuck had a compassion for his fellow Canadians. The one thing that seemed to be motivating Chuck more than anything else that I can recall was the injustice perpetrated on the victims of crime. They are not recognized in our society. It seems almost as if the protection of the criminal is greater than the protection of the victims. It is almost as if the victims do not count in this world. I wonder if my colleague could address some of those sorts of situations.

We have the indirect victims of car theft, for example the insurance companies that have to pay out the owners' claims and therefore the premiums go up. Now the victims are not just the insurance companies that have to pay the claims but insurance premiums go up when car thefts increase. The other group of victims are those who perhaps inadvertently buy a car that has been stolen and then lose it on that basis.

It seems to me that the whole motivation that Chuck Cadman had in presenting this bill was to do exactly what my hon. colleague from the Bloc mentioned. He asked whether we needed deterrents and that is precisely the issue. Chuck Cadman wanted to make sure that people who perpetrated crimes would not do so in the same way they had done before. There would be fewer and fewer people engaging in crime because the victims are the people who are left without any recourse.

I think it is important to recognize that the life and motivation of one of our fellow legislators was not designed primarily to punish people or to get even with people. It was simply to recognize that we need to make some changes in our society because unless we make those changes people will continue to engage in crime and the victims will increase. It is time we recognize the victims and protect people from becoming victims of vicious crime.

● (1825)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Madam Speaker, I consider my colleague to be very fortunate to have known Mr. Cadman as well as he did.

The member is absolutely right. What Mr. Cadman was trying to do was protect the victim. It seems all too often in this country that we have a system that seems to protect the criminal and not the victim, which is just wrong. I do not care what side of the political arena one sits on, can we not at least agree that the victims should be the ones who are protected and not the criminals?

Mr. Cadman's bill sought to address that. In all of Mr. Cadman's private members' bills and in all his initiatives, he sought to address that very thing, victims' rights. Let us protect the victims. Let us make sure the victims are heard and that the penalties are toward the criminals. All too often it seems that the victims are the ones who end up being penalized. That is just wrong.

Can we not agree to move forward as a whole, as all parties, with one simple objective in mind, which is to protect the victims and to penalize the criminals? If we can do that, this country will be a far better society than the one in which we have been living under Liberal rule for the last 12 or 14 years.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, would the member elaborate further on the question of minimum sentencing? I believe the bill is designed for organized crime. It is not designed for joyriders. My friend from the Bloc talked about the young person who is charged. This is about removing the vehicle identification signal. Why can we not have a minimum sentence for this type of offence?

● (1830)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, there should be. I absolutely and totally agree 100% with the member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Government Orders

Why is there not? We have to ask the government. It does not seem to be in favour of minimum sentencing and I think that is absolutely a travesty of justice. That is something that we should be doing. We should be embracing it as parliamentarians. I am speechless every time I hear the justice minister stand in his place and say that minimum sentencing does not work. He will not even explore the opportunity to advance that in the House and that is a shame

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made Thursday, October 20, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Government Business No. 18. I do now leave the Chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

[For continuation of proceedings see Part B]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

**Monday, October 24, 2005
(Part B)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 24, 2005

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Continuation of proceedings from Part A]

* * *

[English]

U.S. WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRAVEL INITIATIVE

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 18, Mr. Chuck Strahl in the chair.)

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That this Committee take note of the impact on Canada of the United States Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

• (1830)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, this evening we have agreed to debate an issue of growing interest and concern to Canadians, the western hemisphere travel initiative, or WHTI. The government looks forward to hearing the views of the House on this matter. Constructive ideas can help the government move forward in our shared interest in terms of how we respond to this new U.S. requirement.

The WHTI is not an easy or straightforward issue as it involves changing the requirements governing the immense legitimate flow of people across the shared border between Canada and the United States, and all of the impacts this might have for this historic and vital relationship.

This is neither a domestic nor a partisan issue. It involves a sovereign U.S. border requirement based in law and aimed primarily at U.S. citizens who are entering or re-entering the U.S. from Canada and elsewhere in the hemisphere.

The WHTI is of particular concern to Canadians. We know this by the direct representations we are receiving from our constituents, particularly in border cities and communities.

Canada has noted with great interest statements of concern within the United States itself, at the political level, among business and community stakeholders, and by individual citizens as to whether this initiative will truly result in greater security for Americans as well as whether there will be serious economic and border impacts in their communities.

A number of questions have been asked about whether the initiative can be implemented on time, both in the U.S. and in Canada. What fundamental security concerns are being addressed?

Will there be enough capacity to process millions of new passports or new alternative documents which have yet to be decided on, or yet to be developed? How will border officials implement the new requirements? Will this cause delays and congestion at the border? What planning is underway? What resources are being dedicated to equip our already congested border crossings to deal with such new requirements? I say that looking at the member from Windsor whom I am sure will speak on this in a moment.

Before addressing these questions, we need to have a clear, shared understanding of what the WHTI is attempting to address and what important questions remain to be answered.

We need to recognize that WHTI did not appear out of nowhere. It is intended to implement section 7209 of the U.S. intelligence reform and terrorism provision act, IRTPA, passed in December 2004. It enacts recommendations put forward by the U.S. 9/11 commission. The act passed with near unanimous support in the U.S. senate. Most attention was focused on other well known provisions of the bill; perhaps however, not enough attention was paid to this particular provision.

[Translation]

If I mention this, it is because, following the announcement of the WHTI on April 5, we have all had the opportunity to hear on several occasions statements expressing concern, including statements by the President of the United States and members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives who, for the most part, had supported the legislation.

Canada is constantly re-evaluating its own entry requirements, and we are firmly committed to making our own foundation documents, such as passports, permanent resident cards, citizenship cards and so on, more secure. I believe that it is also important to recognize and acknowledge the fact that the United States has put in place a transparent, official procedure to gather input on the subject.

Indeed, on September 1, 2005, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department officially published in the U.S. federal registry an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking with respect to the WHTI, thereby initiating a 60 day period for receiving comments, which will end on October 31.

Comments are sought concerning the six sources of concern regarding the WHTI.

First, there is the types of documents denoting identity and citizenship that should be acceptable as alternatives to a passport.

Government Orders

Second, there is the economic impact of implementing this initiative.

Third, there is the monetary and other costs anticipated to be incurred by citizens as a result of the new document requirements.

• (1835)

Fourth, there are the possible benefits of this potential rulemaking.

Fifth, there are any alternative methods of complying with the legislation.

Sixth, there are the proposed stages for implementing the initiative.

Once the period for comments has expired and the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State have had an opportunity to examine the comments and possibly revise the bill, new official rules will be issued some time before the end of this year.

I can say that the Government of Canada, acting through the Department of Foreign Affairs, will submit official comments by October 31 under this proposed rulemaking procedure. These comments are currently being drawn up by nine departments and organizations affected by these issues, in concert and in consultation with one another, including the departments of Foreign Affairs, Citizenship and Immigration, Industry, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, International Trade, and Indian Affairs and Northern Development, as well as the Canada Border Services Agency and the Privy Council Office.

We have informed the main stakeholders all across Canada about this procedure, as well as the provincial and territorial authorities, and we have encouraged them to make their views and recommendations known, in concert with their American partners when appropriate.

It is now or never, therefore, for us to study these questions and mobilize to make our points of view known in Washington and elsewhere. The Government of Canada has already begun implementing an ambitious awareness-raising strategy through the Department of Foreign Affairs.

As part of our strategy so far, we have contacted provincial and territorial officials as well as the main stakeholders across the country to ensure that they are well aware of this consultation period, inform them about our position on this question, and encourage them to make their own views known.

We are doing the same in the United States with various stakeholders as well as political authorities in various states and municipalities by calling upon our diplomatic missions in Anchorage, Seattle, Detroit, Buffalo, Minneapolis, Boston, and so forth for this mission.

Our embassy in Washington is also having numerous discussions with all members of Congress who have any influence in this issue.

[*English*]

What should we be saying to our U.S. partners in addition to raising questions and concerns? First, we need to clearly commu-

nicate that we support and share the security concerns which the United States is trying to address through WHTI.

Second, we believe that we should offer to work with the U.S. as we are doing in a wide variety of areas under the smart borders action plan and more recently under the security and prosperity partnership announced last March. This is designed to strengthen the foundations for establishing identity and citizenship in our respective documents and passport issuance processes.

We believe that foundation documents such as birth certificates and citizenship cards need to be enhanced and better secured. Until foundation documents are enhanced and secured, the kinds of documents we use in both countries to apply for passports or currently to cross the border, a passport requirement or passport-based document at the land border will not alone improve our security.

Third, we need to underline that requiring passports or passport-like documents, as the only way for legal travel of all persons across shared land border for business people, service workers, friends, families and tourists, would negatively impact historic and vital relationships and that other options must be considered.

Fourth, we propose to work with the U.S. in assessing which document options would work for the best in our shared land border context including thorough testing at some of the busiest crossings.

However, in Canada's current estimation we do not believe that these efforts can be completed or implemented by January 1, 2008. We need to take the necessary steps to get this right. In conclusion, I look forward to hearing the views and recommendations of other members as this is, in my view, an important issue for all Canadians and all parliamentarians regardless of political stripe.

• (1840)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Chair, this is an issue of huge importance. With all respect to the parliamentary secretary, I did not feel the urgency in his speech that I think this issue commands. This is a big, big issue, and not just because some of my colleagues and I are from border communities. This has huge implications for this country and the economy of this country.

And this is not just on our side of the border. I have tried to make the point with my American colleagues that this has huge implications for the American economy as well. This is a shared border. This is the largest trading relationship in the world. A proposal like this is going to have devastating effects. I can tell members that it is having devastating effects right now. It is hurting our trade between these two countries. It is hurting the flow of goods and services.

The parliamentary secretary said that when this matter went through Congress, almost unanimously, "not enough attention was paid" to this provision. I have to ask him, why does he think that is? A number of us were quite alarmed earlier this year when this matter was first raised. The President of the United States appeared to squelch the issue at one point. He cast doubts on it so I took some encouragement from that, but nonetheless, it did go through.

Government Orders

If I understood the comments of the parliamentary secretary, he said that even at this point we have not made a formal response to this. He said it is being passed around through I think nine different departments. Would it not be more expeditious if the minister responsible for public security got on the phone to her counterparts in the United States and said this is a bad idea, it is something that is going to hurt everybody, so let us do something about it and kill this initiative? I hope the member will comment on that and I hope I hear from him that there is a little more urgency within the government because of this problem. That is number one.

Number two, would he and the government please consider one of the things that I have suggested to my American counterparts, which is that they exempt us altogether from this? I appreciate that the Americans have problems on their southern border. I appreciate that there are worldwide security concerns that the Americans share quite frankly with Canadians, but the Canada-U.S. border is not the problem. How about asking the Americans to completely exempt us from it and go with the way it is now? They can deal with the other parts of the world as they have to, but the problem is not the Canada-U.S. border.

Could I hear from the parliamentary secretary that this is going to have a little more urgency, that the government is a little more concerned about this than I have heard up to this point? Will it get on the phone and make the point to our American colleagues that we should be exempted from this altogether, because the pain is going to be felt not only on our side but the American side as well?

•(1845)

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, it is a very clear issue of concern to all Canadians, and the hon. member, who not only represents a border community but is also the esteemed whip of his party, speaks for all of us.

There is no doubt that this issue has come fast and furious, as the hon. member has quite rightly pointed out. I am glad to see that he has taken the opportunity to mention this in his own paper on the weekend. As the member for Niagara Falls has said before, Canada is not the problem. Referring to the Americans, he said that they have a problem along their southern border, not here, so they are trying to solve a problem that does not exist.

Perhaps that comment is instructional, because what the hon. member has said is in fact the position of the Canadian government and that has been to recognize that we thought, as the hon. member has concluded, this initiative may have had something to do with other parts of the U.S. border. We have seen in recent times where there is concern existing now on the border, not just because of security but also as a result of restrictions and the ability to get over there.

Other restrictions that are creating problems for us, of course, are not limited to problems such as the flow and the difference in exchange that we have between the two nations, but specifically to this very initiative. It is an initiative which threatens the viability not just of Canada but of the 38 states in the U.S. right now whose number one trading partner is indeed Canada.

The message is clear. This weekend, for instance, I can tell the hon. member, our ambassador referred to this as a sleeper issue. He is making every effort he can to create sensibility and sensitivity to

the issue, but we have to do it unanimously and we have to do it with one voice.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Chair, let me say to my friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that this is almost surreal. We have the President of the United States, after this legislation has gone through, making comments to the effect that it appeared he did not know about it. I forget what the term was that he used; perhaps it was “amounting to stupid”.

We have Senator Clinton, one of the leading Democrats in the Senate, in a border state to Canada, admitting in public that she did not know this provision had become the law.

My colleague from Windsor and I have on several occasions now met with the northern border caucus from the House of Representatives in the U.S. To an individual, that northern caucus is opposed to these provisions.

We see a huge number of elected officials in the United States who are opposed to doing this. They recognize, as the parliamentary secretary just mentioned, that this negative impact will not be on Canada alone, but that it is going to have a major negative impact on those 38 states that see us—and we are—as their major trading partner. It is going to mean huge calamities for cultural exchanges.

We know all that and so do they, but the issue is, and this is where the surreal part comes in, who is running the government over there? Is there any possibility that we are going to get through to the real decision maker, which appears to be someone in Homeland Security as opposed to the elected officials?

I would ask the parliamentary secretary if we are doing anything to identify where the decision making is to see if we can get this decision reversed.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, those are excellent questions, but ultimately that decision rests with the U.S. people, the people in that country who know full well that their greatest trading partner is not somewhere else in the world but in fact between the two borders.

There has been a lot of discussion about security trumping economics, but we see them as being just as important. Of course, there has been from this side not only the initiative by the House leader today to have this debate at a very important time when the American Secretary of State is here, but there is no doubt in my mind we are going to hear shortly from my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

In terms of understanding the U.S. Senate, the U.S. Congress and the structure of power in the United States today, it is important that we work at all levels to ensure the understanding that this is not an initiative that is going to hurt just us, but ultimately an initiative that is going to hurt the United States. And what is bad for people in the United States, bad for trade, bad for economics, bad for our historical relationship between the two countries, for which there is no precedent in the world, I think is an easy sell for people who want to listen. The American people and their representatives will listen to that, once, of course, a decision is made and the comment period is over at the end of this month, which is just a week away.

Government Orders

• (1850)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure to ask my colleague a question. Following up along that line, what has the Prime Minister specifically said to his American counterpart at this time? I would like to know that, because we have heard American officials, as my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh has noted, who have come out swinging against this initiative. They have been outspoken.

It is absolutely correct to say this is a reciprocal problem. It is not just on the Canadian side. It is a simple matter of fact that 39 states do depend upon Canada as their number one trading partner.

I would like to know of a specific instance where the Prime Minister has come out against this to say this initiative is wrong and, more important, what he is doing today in terms of raising this with his counterpart to ensure that our voice is there. If it is a reciprocal problem, as we have identified, at least on the level of members of Parliament who are representing us in the United States, why has the government been absent from that partnership to fight this initiative?

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, I want to assure the hon. member, who too has been very open and outspoken on this issue, as I referred to a little earlier in my presentation, and we know where he comes from in terms of employment opportunities and of course the trade between the two areas.

The hon. member knows that the minister responsible for public safety and emergency preparedness, the Deputy Prime Minister, has been in touch on this issue, as it relates to this particular initiative, with Michael Chertoff, as early as back in March. Long before this evening happened, the government was aware of this. My colleague will be able to expatiate at greater length on this.

As it relates to working with organizations and groups and the American public, I think we are coming to a point where the two countries are going to have to recognize that, despite the disputes that exist between us and despite the difficulties in seeing the world through very different kaleidoscopes, the greatest partner and the greatest friend that nation can have is one that is immediately north of its border.

We will be there for the Americans, but rather than punishing them by asking them for passports, I think it is important for us to try to remind them that they are the first ones who are going to be affected by this.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Chair, let us review just momentarily what we are looking at here. This is something entitled the “Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative”. It is an initiative that comes out of Congress in the United States. I appreciate the fact that there has been some comment here that it came within the context of a larger legislative framework and that perhaps the people in Congress did not fully comprehend what they were passing.

I do not know if I want to accept that or not; it means accepting the fact that legislators do not read all the material that comes in front of them. Certainly I would dare to say that would not be the case, because it suggests that problems like this could arise.

This Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, this travel document initiative, is going to affect all United States citizens travelling

within the western hemisphere and means that they will now be required to carry a passport. That is not where it ends. It also is going to affect foreign nationals who currently are not required to present a passport to travel to the United States. That refers, obviously, to Canadian citizens, and also to citizens of the British overseas territory of Bermuda. It also will affect Mexican citizens.

In terms of when it will be initiated and implemented, according to the legislation laid out in the United States, by December 31, 2006, the requirement will be applied to all air and sea travel to or from Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean and Bermuda. By December 31, 2007, the requirement is going to be extended to all land border crossings as well as all air and sea travel. That is huge in terms of the effect this is going to have. Specifically, we are obviously concerned about Canada-U.S. cross-border commerce, trade and tourism.

We are asking that a number of things move into place and that they happen immediately. First of all, the government has to get very aggressive on this. I appreciate the fact that it was members of this House who requested a take note debate on this matter to raise the level of urgency.

As for my hon. friend across the way, I believe he is concerned about it. Frankly, we would have liked to see the government take the initiative on this the first day it became evident, because, as we all know, in areas of government and politics when there is a delay it could suggest that there is a lack of interest. Or it could send a message that the people being affected really do not think it is that important. Delays can be critical. In this case, they have been. Those delays could hurt this cause.

Therefore, first of all we are asking that the government aggressively move this onto its agenda in every meeting, and including in that the initiating of meetings with our American counterparts. Certainly we hope that the various ministers who are meeting right now with Condoleezza Rice, the U.S. Secretary of State, are impressing upon her the urgency of this case.

There are a number of things we would like to suggest. We do not just want to criticize. We want to bring forward alternatives and options. We are asking that options be considered. First of all, in regard to the photo ID that is available now and which people have been using for decades in the United States, we are asking that the U.S. government agree to that ID as acceptable.

We understand that the U.S. administration has some concerns regarding the standards of some of the processes of individual states and the efficacy of their driver's licence photo ID, for instance. If that is a problem, the U.S. administration can simply set the appropriate standards and require each individual state where it is a problem to rise and meet those standards.

Bringing in this blanket application of passports for all is an overburdening way of addressing this problem. We understand the legal concerns and the legitimate concerns of the administration related to some of these states, but that could be dealt with by implementing proper standards.

Government Orders

The U.S. administration has worked with Canada, and Canada with it, in terms of adopting a number of other ways of identifying individuals crossing the border, which have resulted in rapid access to and from the border. The so-called century program, the NEXUS program and the FAST program all have been shown to be effective in terms of moving people and commerce rapidly back and forth across the border with a high level of security. This can be done.

• (1855)

The order of magnitude of the problem is huge. There are 300,000 crossings per day. Of those 300,000 crossings, if we accept the stats which I believe are close to being correct, barely a third of Americans even have passports. At 300,000 crossings a day we are looking at probably 200,000 people a day who would not be able to cross the border as they do now. That is gigantic. The effect of that would be huge.

The Canadian Tourism Commission conducted a study in July 2005. That is how many months this issue has been out there. We wonder why the Liberal government has been so slow in moving on this. The Canada Tourism Commission estimated that by 2008 when the program is fully implemented the economic losses would amount to nearly \$1 billion a year. We cannot afford that. We would go head to head with the Americans on trade any day of the week, but we cannot afford to have their citizens, and to a degree ours, affected by this passport regulation.

There are other costs that are not even being considered. These are the tourism costs and the business costs which would be huge. Think of the costs to families alone. Most of the kids of Canadian families who cross the border do not have passports. They cross with their parents who use a driver's licence as identification.

If the cost of a standard Canadian passport stayed at \$87 for the next few years, we would be looking at a cost of \$350 for a family of four, a cost that the family did not have to bear before. We could flip that to the U.S. side, where American passports cost \$97, although theirs are good for 10 years and not just 5, and calculate those costs. Everywhere we look, somebody is getting hit in a negative way. It is simply unacceptable.

I wonder if Congress even considered the unintended security risk that is going to result on families, especially those living close to the border in some of the larger cities and smaller towns on either side of the border. Think about it. If families that now cross routinely every day want to go to the effort of getting passports, every car that goes across the border will probably have four, five or six passports in the glove compartment because they have to be there every day. That is an unintended security that Congress probably never even contemplated. How many of those passports are going to be lost, stolen or misplaced?

The whole situation has evolved somewhat rapidly. We decried the lack of initial attention to this by the Liberal government. We are glad that the parliamentary secretary appears to be on the case now, but we implore our government and speak directly to those in Congress in the United States and to the U.S. administration to please abandon this plan. It is a sledgehammer that is going to result in unnecessary costs, costs that are going to cripple the economies of many provinces and regions. It will certainly hurt the economy of our nation, many businesses and certainly tourism and there is no

evidence that it is going to bring any increased sense of security, either explicitly or implicitly.

We are asking for that reconsideration and for the Liberal government to pull out all the stops and get on this right away. We have provided some positive suggestions and constructive approaches for other ways of maintaining security. We want to work with our American counterparts to make sure that the border is secure, but this is not the way to do it. Security will not be enhanced. Freedom will definitely be restricted and the economy will be hurt.

• (1900)

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we need to make sure that Canadians understand this is not an issue that has suddenly emerged as something that the government is dealing with at the last minute. This was raised by the Deputy Prime Minister and her counterpart, Mr. Chertoff, in Texas back in March. I cannot speak for the Prime Minister, but I very much expect that at those same meetings the Prime Minister raised it with President Bush. There have been ongoing discussions over many months with the U.S. authorities looking at options that would be different from the requirement for passports.

I should point out that the U.S. government is asking for the same treatment of its own U.S. citizens. Up until now U.S. citizens travelling, let us say, to the Caribbean, Bermuda or Mexico could leave and come back without passports. The U.S. government has said that will not be acceptable in the future and that everybody coming back into the United States, whether they be a U.S. citizen or some other citizen, would be required under this scenario to carry a passport.

This government has worked very closely with the U.S. government on a whole range of border issues. We have reached many agreements with it. I think the government is still hopeful that there is another option that would be possible. We really want a bit more time to look at different options that are quite technical in nature and require some testing, et cetera.

Would the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla argue for the status quo? I know from our perspective the status quo would be fine, although we have a shared objective with the United States in terms of security. I wonder what alternatives the member sees to the proposal that is currently laid out by the U.S. government.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chair, I proposed a number of options that would address the security concerns. I have asked that the administration look to some of the systems in place, the Sentry system, NEXUS, FAST, and the system that is in place at the Mexican border for those who actually produce documents there. We realize that is another issue. We should also require that the federal administration in the United States require its various states to upgrade their own standards in terms of producing photo ID. That could be government produced photo ID or drivers' licences. We are making an assumption here that passports cannot be forged. Certainly they can be and they are forged all the time. Requiring that it be a passport is not necessarily in and of itself going to solve the problem. Increased technology biometrics and other things that can be applied certainly would be helpful.

Government Orders

The member opposite also took some umbrage with my remarks related to the speed at which the government, in my view, has not acted on this issue. He made a reference that in March of this year the Deputy Prime Minister raised the issue. The act in the United States is the intelligence reform and terrorism prevention act, which was passed in 2004. That was a year before the Deputy Prime Minister even raised the issue. Just as here, a year before any act of government passes, it is debated and put on the various tables for consideration and input. That act was two years in the making. That act will substantially affect the economy of Canada and it took almost two years for the Deputy Prime Minister to respond. I do not call that performance.

● (1905)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Chair, in 2004 there were also public hearings about that bill that created the situation we are in right now. Would the member be surprised to learn that the Canadian government actually made no submissions to those hearings nor in subsequent opportunities that had been available to submit questions?

I would point out that the U.S. Congress, the House of Representatives and the northern border caucus came together to create a joint letter in questioning the practices and also the supports that they believed would affect their communities. As it was appropriately mentioned, this will have a significant impact on United States citizens in terms of tourism. A recent study had that cost at around \$800 million within three years.

Would my colleague be surprised to learn that the government is not on record? I do not know if he has any information, but I certainly have not been able to find anything in terms of official submissions from the Canadian government.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chair, that is a key question. I do not want to definitively say that there never was in any way, shape or form a government presentation, but I will agree with my friend that I have not been able to find any. If the government could produce some, that would be good. It just underlines the concern that something of this order of magnitude could go unaddressed when the administration south of the border invited requests and participation.

I was at the initial meeting when Tom Ridge, the then head of the homeland security department, a brand new department at that time, was appointed. In fact, he made a trip to Ottawa in 2002. At the residence of the ambassador, where a number of us, including members of the government, were gathered, he made a very specific plea, and it was a plea, to his Canadian counterparts in government. He said, "Please talk to us about concerns. Please bring ideas to us". Again, it was two years before that piece of legislation ever hit the tables under the dome of the Capitol in Washington. I share the concern that my friend has raised.

In direct answer to his question as to whether I would be surprised, I would have to say I would be disappointed, but seeing how the government has responded poorly on a number of these initiatives, I am sad to say I would not be surprised if it had not made a presentation.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Chair, it came up that the U.S. legislation had been in the making for a very long time, over two years.

I was a member of the foreign affairs committee when it went to Washington, D.C. in 1999. I came across a brochure that the American government or the Senate was proposing that section 110 of the INS be changed so that at the border, American citizens and Canadian citizens be exempt. Permanent residents of the U.S. would be exempt, but landed immigrants in Canada were not exempt from showing their documents when they crossed the border, particularly their passports.

I brought that issue to the attention of the Ambassador, Mr. Chrétien, at his residence in the evening. Mr. Chrétien said that he could not believe that it was written in the brochure. He said it was a mistake, because permanent residents should be equal in status to landed immigrants in Canada. He said he would verify it in the morning. The next day when we were at his office, he asked his secretary to make some phone calls. She verified that it was true. Then I asked Mr. Chrétien, the Canadian ambassador to the U.S. in Washington, D.C. why he did not know about it. He was surprised.

I would say that the Canadian government was asleep at the wheel at that time. It did not know that such a significant change had taken place while it was sitting at the table. Now we are bearing the consequences because the Liberals did not take the appropriate action at that time.

The Canadian government did not take appropriate action and its ambassador was not aware of the situation. On that issue I would like to hear the comments of the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla.

The other point is that it will hurt our economy if this remains in place. It will affect our economy, jobs and other things.

One particular industry that will be hit hard is the transportation industry. The drivers, who are usually immigrants, have had difficulty in the past. However, does the member believe that if this continues it will hurt the trucking industry in a major way, particularly with the long lines and long waiting times at the border?

● (1910)

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Chair, at the risk of being partisan, which I am, again my hon. friend is bringing out some disturbing examples, whether of incapability, delinquency or negligence. I have had a number of meetings with our former ambassador to the United States, Mr. Raymond Chrétien who is the nephew of the former prime minister.

Those whom we place in Washington are not only to be the neighbour, the friend and the conduit of information but also the watchdog on issues that affect us. It is astounding that it would take the diligent work of my hon. friend to bring to the ambassador's attention the brochure that caused such alarm. It also is astounding to hear from the embassy that is was not aware of the situation. The question is how could it happen? How could a government here not be aware of what was coming down the pike?

Government Orders

I do not want to get people unnecessarily upset, but we hear the same question. How could the government not have known that hundreds of millions of dollars were flying out of the treasury toward the sponsorship scandal? How could it not have known that the head of the Mint was charging between three-quarters and \$1 million in expenses? The Canadian Mint is a large institution. It manufactures all the money in the country.

I do not want to impugn motives. Nor do I want to suggest motives. Very clearly the record shows that the government has not been competent in protecting the interests of Canadians. That is something for voters to consider at the next election.

I am wanting to get beyond that. We will make the statement that it is not competent, but how do we fix it? We have put some things on the table in terms of how it could be fixed. We hope the government listens and together we can fix the problem and improve relations on both sides of the border.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to rise to address an American initiative that could cause irreparable harm on both sides of the border.

I will give an example. About ten years ago, I undertook to create, with the towns of Burlington, in Vermont, and Plattsburgh, in New York state, what we call a triangle of excellence with my riding of Saint-Jean. At the time, we decided to take a look at the bilateral relations closest to us. These towns are located about 50 or 60 kilometres from my riding. We decided to promote relations in the area of culture. We realized that, on the American side, particularly in New England, there were many people of French descent. So, we told them that if they were interested in going back to their French roots, they should come to the riding of Saint-Jean, which has everything that is needed, including immersion programs and schools. This is how these exchanges began.

Now, people regularly cross the border for reasons related to culture, but also to business, because of the links that exist between some companies. We discovered that some companies in Plattsburgh were getting their supplies from subcontractors in California, not knowing that, 50 kilometres north of their communities, they could find suppliers at a cheaper cost, given the value of the Canadian dollar and the proximity of these sources.

As regards business, education and tourism, we send a delegation every year to the Burlington jazz festival and to the Mayor's Cup, which is a boat competition held on Lake Champlain. As for our neighbours, they come to our hot air balloon festival.

According to statistics, only 40% of these visitors currently have a U.S. passport, while 50% of the Canadians who cross the border have a Canadian passport. From now on, if a passport is required, it will cost Americans \$97 and Canadians \$87 to get that document and be allowed to cross the border.

For example, take a small family with two children that decides to come to Canada. It must make an investment of close to \$400 US. Not only will this not be an incentive to get a passport, people who will have to renew it before coming to Canada may well decide not to bother. So, this would have a significant impact on our bilateral exchanges with the Americans.

A year ago, we created what we call the border caucus, with four deputy chairs: myself for the Bloc Québécois, my colleague from Windsor West for the NDP, another colleague for the Liberal Party, and a final one for the Conservatives. This problem was brought to our attention about two months ago. We held a meeting in Sault Ste. Marie with our U.S. counterparts, including Michigan congressman Bart Stupak, at their invitation. The first item on the agenda was the western hemisphere travel initiative. They do not want it either.

In the riding of Saint-Jean we created a highly specific action plan. I even raised the problem in the Bloc Québécois caucus. I suggested that all my colleagues write to our respective mayors. I went even further and sent the same letter to the U.S. state governors with whom we have regular contact, to get them to object categorically to this initiative, which will create chaos on both sides of the border.

The plan of action was not a complicated one. We contacted the Chambers of Commerce in Burlington and Plattsburgh, whom we already knew because of the triangle of excellence, as well as the state governors. More recently, the Quebec-New York summit was held in Albany. I could not attend because I was here in the House but I sent some people from my riding with letters informing the governor of the problem. Moreover, the Quebec premier attended and did likewise.

There is so much opposition surrounding this that I cannot understand why the plan is still in existence. Probably the Department of Homeland Security has determined that security needed to be the primary concern and that security would be achieved by imposing passports. We know that they are not the solution.

So we in the Bloc Québécois initiated this movement. I see that my colleague in the Conservative Party has done the same thing, sending a letter to a number of members asking that they intervene. He asked them to do so personally but also to create an environment that is evidence of our objection in order to convince the Americans to put a stop to this.

● (1915)

All the day or two excursions and the return trips to Montreal will come to an end. People will not think it is worth paying \$100 U.S. to get a passport. Before, they travelled to Montreal. Now, if they are from Albany, they might go to New York City instead. It will be the same thing on the Canadian side. People who used to go to Lake Champlain in Plattsburgh, for a day trip, will go swimming elsewhere. They will not pay for passports for the entire family just for that. This will have a major impact.

However, I do think this government should adopt stricter security measures. I am flabbergasted when I hear comments from Canadian customs officers. When someone arrives from the United States and goes through customs to enter into the Canada, if the customs officers see on their screen that he is a wanted criminal the guideline from their department is to let him through and call the police. Maybe we should do our part for security. Those kinds of situations are unacceptable.

Government Orders

RCMP officers need to be permanently posted at the border or, if need be, these responsibilities should be transferred to the Sûreté du Québec. As a last resort, we could arm the customs officers so that they can arrest these people.

It is because of these types of situations that Americans are becoming tougher. We do not have enough discipline to control our borders much more effectively, but we should.

I just have this to say. If such a resolution is submitted to Parliament tomorrow, I hope all parties will object.

The border caucus is meeting with the U.S. ambassador tomorrow evening. I think it would be great if during the meeting, the 53 members whose riding borders on the U.S. said that, this morning, a resolution was unanimously passed by Parliament that opposes this. We have to stop this nonsense. We must ensure that the bilateral transportation, the transportation of individuals, the free passage of goods and people is done without obstacles or pitfalls. We must not prevent people from traveling freely, as that would affect our economies.

• (1920)

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, I want to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Saint-Jean, who has spoken in a voice and on a tone which, tomorrow, will hopefully represent the consensus of this House and our Parliament. I would also like to congratulate him for taking the non-partisan actions which he has described well. Through these examples, he has shown that many U.S. representatives are still opposed.

I think that, in this House, there is something we are finding rather difficult, and that is the fact that the Americans, and the people at Homeland Security in particular, could perceive this initiative as a matter of domestic policy. How can one possibly look at this issue and think that it concerns domestic affairs? That is the real problem, despite what the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla said, who made partisan comments unfortunately. This is not the first time that this member fails to recognize that the river does not run south, as he once explained during an election campaign.

I have a question for the hon. member. Besides the consultations that it is undertaking, how else could the government further facilitate the capacity to put our point across and really press the Americans to make the right decision and reconsider their positions?

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his question. My comments will not be partisan, but it is still a political issue. If we look at the list that I suggested to my caucus, we will see that those to whom we must make representations are all politicians. This must not be done by letter either.

As a critic on national defence issues, whenever I travel to Washington or meet Americans in international forums, such as NATO or others, I take that opportunity to tell them that this measure will not benefit anyone. I am often told that, when it comes to security, they feel that Canada is not doing enough. In my opinion, perhaps we are not doing quite enough.

Take the example of customs officers, to whom I referred earlier. Let us imagine that criminals show up at 11 p.m. at the small border crossing of Lacolle. There is only one officer to deal with them. What is he going to do? According to his department's directives, he

is to let them in. Then, he calls the Quebec provincial police. The police officer tells the customs officer that he is on his way, but that he is 100 kilometres away. Considering how long it is going to take him to travel on highway 15, which has some 50 exits, by the time he arrives, the criminals will be long gone.

We have a responsibility when it comes to security. However, we must not allow the Department of Homeland Security to go that far. I think this is a red herring. This is not the way to do things. If we advocate the free movement of goods and people, perhaps we should opt for the status quo.

However, we must ensure that our customs officers and our customs offices are safe, and that arrests are made from time to time. We must not rely on statistics and say that 300 individuals were admitted this year, but none were arrested. We have a role to play with political authorities. We are already fulfilling that role, not only with letters, but also with words. That is the way to achieve our goal. There is not much time left. Indeed, the 60 day consultation period expires at the end of October.

• (1925)

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, people might look at me and say, “What interest would someone from northeastern British Columbia have in this particular debate about the border issues and specifically about this initiative that would see not only Canadians but Americans would have to carry passports to travel back and forth between our two nations?”

I can say to members that from northeastern British Columbia in my riding the Alaska Highway actually starts in Dawson Creek and it is the main thoroughfare through Yukon to the State of Alaska. As well, over in northwestern British Columbia in the riding of Skeena which adjoins my riding of Prince George—Peace River, there is the Alaska panhandle and there is a lot of traffic between Alaskans and people of northwestern British Columbia.

Therefore, it might seem on the surface a bit surprising, obviously we have a great interest in this particular issue. There is a lot of traffic that goes up both the Alaska Highway and up through the inland passage from ports like Prince Rupert to places like Juneau, Skagway and Haines, Alaska, so I have a lot of interest in that.

I am quite astounded to hear the government members present in the debate tonight actually ask opposition members what they see as the solution to this. One of the solutions I would submit is some leadership on the part of the government.

One of the things that all of us as members of Parliament have been struggling with over the last number of years since 9/11 is the increase in administrative activities in our constituency offices, where we have to deal with passports on behalf of our constituents because the government has not provided sufficient resources even for the number of passports that are being asked for by Canadian citizens right now, let alone if this were to come into play.

Government Orders

I would suggest that we need some leadership on the part of the federal government on this issue. I wonder if my Bloc Québécois colleague would agree that the government has really fumbled the ball on negotiating and working with the Americans to see what exactly is needed and then providing the resources necessary, instead of just sloughing this off to individual members of Parliament to try and pick up the pieces and try to assist Canadians to get their passports.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, this is a good question. I would say that yes, it is important that the federal government makes representations. I suppose that today, with the American secretary of State, this must be on the order of the day.

I want to go back to the border caucus. We are no longer partisan in a border caucus. We have 53 members who are part of it and this is another factor. In other words, if the government is not tough enough or does not do its work effectively, 53 members can go to Washington, each on their own, and say that they are part of a border caucus and express the way they see things.

We do not want this to remain solely in the hands of top government officials. The Department of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister must not be the only ones solving the issue. Members as a whole must also take part in this.

If the government is being nonchalant or lax, we have a group of extremely active members who will go to Washington to meet their counterparts. This is when things will start to change. As soon as we meet with American senators or members of the House of Representatives, who are our counterparts, together we manage to change things.

This requires tremendous team work. I invite the government to do its job. For its part, the border caucus will do its job of making representations and lobbying American interests to ensure that this new initiative, which would be disastrous for both sides of the border, is not implemented.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Saint-Jean for his comments. I feel he has raised some very useful points.

[*English*]

We need to clarify that the government has been very active on this particular issue. There were some timelines mentioned earlier in the House referring to this initiative of the United States. In fact, the intelligence reform and terrorism prevention act was passed in the United States in December 2004, and that mandated the department of homeland security to implement a system where foreign nationals and U.S. citizens would present a passport when entering the United States.

I should point out that we have had much success on other issues. Canada is the only country to be exempted from the U.S. visitor program which requires fingerprinting. We were able to successfully lobby for that. The government has been on this particular issue for some time at the official level and at the political level. It is not an easy issue, but I thank the member for his constructive comments.

He is right on when he says that it is American citizens who have as much at stake with this as Canadian citizens.

• (1930)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Chair, I will conclude by saying that the matter before us tonight is not as contentious as the softwood lumber issue. With the latter, the Americans are penalizing Canadian industry.

In this case, we need to convince our American friends that both sides are being penalized. That is a lot easier to do. There are as many of our American partners opposed to this initiative as there are Canadians. I think that the proper approach will lead to a worthwhile solution for both sides.

I invite people to support the lobbying that is going on in the U.S., on both the government and the opposition sides. There is very little controversy involved. The Americans will be penalized so much with this, as we will be as well, that we are likely to see a happy outcome—we hope—before October 31.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am happy to speak on this subject, but I am not happy about the circumstances we find ourselves in here today, especially late in the day. Canadians have until October 31 to make submissions, whether it be business, members of Parliament or provincial legislatures. We find this very difficult to accept.

I do have a lot of respect, and I say this at the outset, for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. However, I have difficulty with the government's position on this and the fact that we have several agencies that are involved in this, yet we have a small contingency of Liberals here tonight.

I want to begin by putting some of this into context. We have seen a trampling of Canadian rights in terms of our relationship with the United States. We have to put this into perspective. We have not been standing up for ourselves since 9/11. We have not been standing up for our country and specifically for the northern border between Canada and the United States versus what has been happening on the southern border between Mexico and the United States.

Quite literally, we have allowed the Americans push both of those borders into the same category. That is why we find ourselves in the position we are in today. It is because many people in the United States view their northern border in the same way as their southern border.

The most recent example of that is the fact that we are going to have minutemen patrols, with their vigilante and citizen groups, patrolling the borders between northern states and Canadian provinces. They are doing this because they believe there is insufficient security there.

Government Orders

This has also been compounded when the government did very little to raise these issues in the NSEER program at the time. The NSEER program categorized Canadian citizenship. For example, if individuals were Pakistani nationals in the past and now were Canadian citizens, they were fingerprinted and photographed at the border. To this date I have Canadian citizens who used to be Pakistani nationals that cannot get scrubbed of the U.S. visa program. It is a serious problem that we have not yet addressed. It is one of the things that we do not stand up for is the fact that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. Hence, we now have a system where we have a passport requirement for this nation that will be a drag on our economic development.

This problem has been raised before. I raised this problem on April 11, 2005 at the industry committee. It is very important to note this because at that time we had Ms. Michele MacKenzie in front of us from the Canadian Tourism Commission. I asked her specifically about this issue. I said:

This is the biggest threat to tourism we have right now. If a family of four consisting of two American adults and two American children come to Canada, it's going to cost them an additional \$350. That's if they're willing to actually get in their car and go down to the processing office.

The answer I received from Ms. MacKenzie at that time was:

The research we're pursuing right now on the passport issue is going to cost us in the vicinity of \$50,000. That's a specific piece of research. We are not budgeting for the passport issue per se. We're a marketing organization. We will use that information to help us market more effectively, given the concerns we have around this issue.

I responded to that by saying:

We have a growing trade deficit in tourism with the United States, our most important market, and we have \$50,000 to deal with the most important issue facing tourism.

What was happening at that time with the Canadian Tourism Commission was that it was worried about spending \$17 million of taxpayers' money to move from Ottawa to Vancouver, as opposed to the biggest economic threat that we faced in tourism in recent history and probably the country's history.

To put this in perspective, when we finally got the board to respond, it did spend approximately \$150,000 to \$200,000 to do an extensive study that was done and then hidden from the general public. It was not posted until July on the Internet website. It had the impacts and effects of significant magnitude to our tourism industry. Members can go to the tourism website and read it.

We are looking at a loss of revenue of \$1.756 billion in Canada over three years and a \$785 million loss in Canadian revenue in the United States. I want to break it down because this is not only an Ontario issue or a Quebec issue. This is a national issue that is very significant.

The projected loss of business alone in those three years from Atlantic Canada was \$135 million; Quebec, \$223 million; Ontario, \$859 million; Manitoba, \$33 million; Saskatchewan, \$18 million; Alberta, \$86 million and British Columbia, \$403 million.

It is important to note that the hotel association which represents \$12.6 billion of investment in terms of tourism in Canada has been expressing this concern. We want to talk about solutions. I would like to thank Rob Evans of our Holiday Inn Select who has been very

active on the border issue in Windsor for many years, as well as this file. In his final summary he came up with a recommendation that states:

In the estimation of the Hotel Association of Canada we believe this initiative cannot be completed or implemented by January 1, 2008. Accordingly, we believe implementation must be delayed.

● (1935)

People have been speaking out about this and I would follow it up by ensuring we note that some of them have been Canadians. Once this was in the press, the U.S. ambassador, Frank McKenna, said, "many Americans will stop travelling to Canada if new U.S. entry laws make it too much of a hassle to get back home".

He went on to say:

—Canada would lose out on a lot of casual, cross-border traffic in the form of impulse tourists who cross just to catch a hockey game or do some shopping.

It's a very real fear that will have significant implications for our economy.

Why have we not heard the same type of statement by our Prime Minister? Why have we not heard the Prime Minister demand a course of action? I do not find this acceptable from the government's position.

Furthermore, we had other people speak out about the issue. I would point to the Mohawk Nation. Chief Ransom said:

Most of our Tribal members will not be able to afford a passport and many do not believe they should have to even apply for one. For our Tribe, it will result in tremendous economic losses that will devastate our community with no benefit to us.

Quebec Premier Jean Charest said:

It would be a further impediment to travel and trade. The border must be part of the solution to enhance international trade, not a problem.

Manitoba Premier Gary Doer, along with North Dakota Governor John Hoeven, said that it would "affect tourism and trade". Doer estimates the change could cost Manitoba's tourism industry \$33 million every year.

I think it is important to note that I asked a question in the House of Commons about the fact that Hillary Clinton and New York Governor George Pataki held a joint press conference. We are talking about a Democratic and Republican initiative to speak about this initiative. Why is it that their voices, American elected officials, are carrying the day for Canadian issues that affect us so dearly? That is not acceptable, especially given that at that time the Prime Minister was in New York and could have said something. He should have made a point. We should not be sitting floundering here tonight deciding what we will do about it. We should have had that leadership long ago.

We have had many different people speak out against this U.S. initiative. I pointed earlier to the northern border caucus and I would point out that we have been doing some work with them in terms of our border caucus on the Canadian side.

Many people are interested in finding a resolution to this. I think the solution is to stop this initiative and call for its delay immediately because it is not only in the best interest of Canadians, it is also in the interest of Americans. Why is it so difficult for us to say that is the case?

Government Orders

If we look at the fact that the implementation of passports is done under the guise of national security, I would suggest that it is a ruse. The fact is that it was passports that allowed the 9/11 terrorists into the United States to begin with. This is not a solution for us.

It is very difficult to understand. If we have continual economic damage on our border because we are not investing in the infrastructure, in the staffing and in the necessary means to get past this, we will watch our economies erode significantly in the northern hemisphere. That would render us vulnerable to security issues as we will not be able to afford to do the things necessary to ensure we are safe.

Another issue that is important to note is in terms of the government's attitude. I do not know what its thoughts are in terms of the Canadian Tourism Commission but what it essentially is saying to all the border communities is that they are hung out to dry.

One of the things we noted in the committee was that they were looking at the effects of, for example, the convention business. Vancouver, Montreal and other spots like that would have difficulty procuring conventions. The additional costs that delegates from abroad would have to incur to get over to Canada would be a factor, but the reality is that on our border communities we will lose not only an economy but a culture, where we have brothers, sisters, friends, relatives, business acquaintances and many Canadians who actually go over to work in the United States. All of those relationships will be impeded.

We will change significantly the dynamics between our two nations. We will find a distancing that will be very harmful in the way that we operate domestically in the world, which is why it is important for the government to get out in front now and say that enough is enough, that it has to end and that it is not in the best interests of either of us.

• (1940)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I agree with the hon. member. I do not think a single member in the House would disagree with the hon. member. I heard the hon. House leader for the Conservative Party again torquing this as if it were a partisan issue and saying that somehow the government has been derelict.

Mr. Jay Hill: You have been.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, I did not heckle that member but let it be known that the hon. House leader believes it is more important to heckle and to banter, as opposed to dealing with some facts and figures. Let me give him one.

When the President of the United States first read about the WHTI in the newspaper and about the need to have passports, he wanted to know what was going on. He thought there was a better way to expedite the legal flow of traffic of people and that if people had to have a passport it would disrupt the honest flow of traffic. He thought there was some flexibility in the law and that is what they were checking out.

The hon. member just talked about Hillary Clinton and Governor Pataki who said the same thing.

If the President of the United States and leading congressmen have a problem with this then one would assume the Canadian government took this to be a question of domestic policy with obvious ramifications for Canada. That clearly may not be the case and so the government will be acting on this on the 31st and in terms of our own response with respect to Condoleezza Rice and the meeting we are having today.

I can quote every one of those hon. members. Let me give the House the comments by the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest since he wants to heckle. He said that the consensus that emerged from the annual meeting of the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary group was that they never realized the impact it would have.

Individuals in the Conservative Party seem more interested in making a point about whether a question of leadership is present, which it clearly is, as opposed to dealing with the more important fundamental issue of protecting Canadian jobs.

Members of the Conservative Party need to make a decision. Are they here to protect the border? Are they here to make sure Canadian interests are defended or are they going to continue with their partisan nonsense and of course deny us an opportunity to have consensus of the House of Commons?

Mr. Jay Hill: Do your job for once.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, you can hear exactly what the Conservatives are saying right now because clearly they believe in heckling and talking over the issues as opposed to debating them. That is the Conservative way as opposed to dealing with these things constructively. If they have a problem they should take it up with the President of the United States because the President has a problem with this, the Prime Minister has a problem with this and Parliament has a problem with this. The only people who treat this as sidebar are those in the Conservative Party.

I would like to encourage the hon. member, since he is in one of the most important border communities where the flow from my riding tends to go through his area at the Ambassador Bridge, that if there are other concerns he may want to raise them now.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Chair, first I would note that the President of the United States has actually done something on the evergreening issue in terms of drug costs in his nation and I think we should take that and do that over here. However he is also talking about fixing this problem.

I do take issue with the member's reference to this being a domestic issue. I do not think it is a U.S. domestic issue. Last year alone 36 million Canadians travelled to the United States and they had access not only to their markets in terms of trade, but they had access to their friends, relatives, jobs and employment. This is a not a domestic issue and the fact is that we will now need a different level of security and a different environment to cross the border.

Government Orders

The frustrating problem I have had in Windsor, Ontario, is that we have not had the support historically there, not just in terms of infrastructure but in staffing. There have been some modest improvement now in staffing which has alleviated some of the problems but it does not take away the fact that we do not have the physical infrastructure and the logistics setup to deal with this issue. What we know right now is that only a small number of Canadians actually apply for passports and hence we have a logistics issue in the passport office to be able to ensure all Canadians have access to it and are able to afford the passport.

I have tabled a motion in the House of Commons to ensure the Auditor General investigates to make sure the passports would be at per cost and not be an increased burden on taxpayers. They should be sold at face value. We also need to ensure that the facilities are there so people can actually get a passport if we have a crisis pending.

We have a significant cultural shift here between ourselves and the United States. I do not believe it is a domestic issue. I think it is one that Canada has to forcefully say to the United States that this is the wrong thing for both of us, and I do not think there is anything wrong with that. I think Canadians can prove there are other ways for the security issue to be handled.

• (1945)

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Chair, one of the questions I have for the member for Windsor West, who has done a terrific job on the Canada-U.S. parliamentary group by the way, is with regard to the lack of interest by the Government of Canada.

For example, Mr. Chair, if you go through the Standing Orders, which I am sure you are pretty familiar with, and routine proceedings every day in this House, we have what we call statements by ministers. I want the member to comment on this because not once has any minister or the Prime Minister stood in the House to give Parliament, the place where these issues should be debated, an update on this issue. This one has just simply gone by them. Now that we are seven days from the comment period ending, they are attempting to make up time.

Would the member please comment on that in terms of the Prime Minister and his government dropping the ball on this issue being a gift?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the work of the member for New Brunswick Southwest as well as the member for Saint John who have both been part of the border caucus.

We have made representations abroad about this issue. I have been troubled in my research and maybe I can be proven wrong today, which I hope is the case. I found a paper trail about how the government really feels about this issue and the representations that it has made to U.S. legislators about this issue, as well as groups and organizations that it has networked with on this.

I know that when I first arrived here back in 2002 we did a trade mission to Washington on softwood lumber and it at least congregated the different elements of American interests that wanted to see Canadian softwood lumber resolved as it was having an effect, for example, on the Home Building Association, the Home Depot,

people who were doing renovations, a whole series of people looking for affordable housing, and it at least tried to outreach those organizations.

I would like to see the government's paper trail of how it reached out to different chambers of commerce and different elected officials across the northern border. I think it is important because it is certainly how we build coalitions. We have many departments involved in this issue and the effects of it are not only being felt on the borders of southern Canada. We are looking at Montreal being able to compete for tourism related to conventions, because there would be hundreds of dollars of additional expenses that delegates would have to pay versus them going to another location in the United States. That is a serious competitive disadvantage that they will now have to attract that type of a business. I hope I can be proven wrong in this. I hope the government has had due diligence and we can find that paper trail of support and representations because in my opinion this has not been discussed enough.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I know the member for Windsor West has been a strong advocate of border issues and, although not terribly partisan, he is very outspoken and is a strong supporter of measures at the border. I should point out that the member for New Brunswick Southwest talked about ministers making statements in the House. Members opposite always have an opportunity to put a question to ministers in question period as well but I do not recall many questions on this topic in the last little while.

The member for Windsor West talked about the lack of investment in infrastructure. Perhaps he has forgotten a few of the facts. He knows full that for phase two of the Windsor-Detroit border initiative, although I do not have the figure in front of me, it is some \$600 million. He knows full well that the Canada Border Services Agency will be hiring another 270 officers for our border. He also knows there is a very active binational panel looking at different options to put in another crossing at Windsor-Detroit.

I think his comment that the government has not invested in infrastructure at the border is somewhat misleading to Canadians.

Is he aware of the program that has been mounted through the Canadian consuls general in the United States to raise this issue in the United States on behalf of Canadians?

• (1950)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Chair, I seem to be spending my time correcting the record here.

The fact is that only \$300 million were allocated for the Windsor border back in 2002, of which only \$100,000 was committed and less than that has been spent. I would invite the minister to inform Canadians later on tonight how much of that actually has been spent.

Second, what has happened on our Windsor border is that the governor of Michigan has taken control of the file, the provincial government is warring with the federal government and recently the Minister of Transport has had to do significant retreating about wanting to turn EC Row Expressway in Windsor into a truck route.

I will conclude my remarks by saying that there has not been enough done on the Windsor border and I stand by that, as do the auto leaders, the industry leaders and a number of different people in the communities across the country. We are talking about the most important crossing in North America and the fact is that less than \$100 million were allocated to it and, of that, little money has actually been spent.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Chair, this issue is absolutely critical for northwestern Ontario.

My riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River covers the entire northern boundary of the State of Minnesota. I have three border crossings: Rainy River at the Manitoba border, Pigeon River, Minnesota and also Fort Frances, Ontario.

The decline in American visitors over the past four years results in about \$150 million loss of revenue for northwestern Ontario. We know that historically from 1972 to August 2005 the trend has been a 42% decline.

What does that mean for small communities such as those in northwestern Ontario? It means the marginal difference between a business being successful or not. Tourist operators, grocers, the craftsmen, gas bars and recreational suppliers all have been hit in some way or another. The number of stations and the number of opportunities have declined very visibly.

I have been asked by many organizations to speak tonight, particularly by northwestern Ontario tourist operators who have led the campaign for Americans to come back to Canada. We want them.

I believe the government can communicate far more effectively. We have had many issues over the past number of years from handguns, driving under the influence, things even such as mid-west United States potatoes and firewood. All of these have had their impacts on border crossings and complaints.

Ontario has lost a greater portion of the U.S. market for the past four years than any other province. Therefore, our role in dealing with the policies of another sovereign nation must be to emphasize that this is a two way street.

More complications, such as proposed by the western hemisphere travel initiative, will make even more Canadians rethink their plans to visit the United States. This is another form of reciprocity that I do not think anyone in the United States expects. I believe the walls, barriers and restrictions will hurt both our nations.

As a former mayor, I was part of a group that initiated an international friendship games between Thunder Bay, Ontario and Duluth, Minnesota. It is with great enthusiasm that I support His Worship Mayor Dan Onichuk of the town of Fort Frances who has proposed a forum of Canadian and American border communities to address some of these roadblocks as they apply to each particular regional situation.

Our new Canadian Border Services Agency has been working very hard to eliminate the problem situations at the field level. It is the first line of both security and hospitality, which is a difficult combination requiring special skill sets. Considering the volume of people who pass through without incident, it does a great job.

Government Orders

However, when someone is turned away, it results in a big furor with rippling adverse publicity.

When I give the Canadian examples, I am only going to emphasize what will happen when the same thing occurs on the American side. When Americans impose more restrictions, it will make it less attractive for Canadians to go there; back to the two way street scenario.

As a government, we need to support, through websites, staff training, presence at trade shows in the United States and any other means, the fact that as Canadians we want Americans. I know our friends in the United States, who are fighting this proposal, also feel the same way. We have to reinforce those positive forces.

When I refer to the two way street for the western hemisphere travel initiative, I know for certain that it will also hurt the U.S. travel industry. Therefore, we must make the American tourism and hospitality industry our allies to resist overly onerous and overly zealous rules and restrictions.

It was quite gratifying as a member of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates to hear witnesses from Passport Canada talk about the progress it has been making in addressing our issues. It will be representing us shortly in the petitions on the western hemisphere travel initiative as part of the general overall governmental perspective.

● (1955)

Making Canada more attractive to our American neighbours, still the longest undefended border in the world, should remain a major point of focus. A national tourism strategy to bring Americans to Canada, working in concert with provincial campaigns, can do much to offset the inevitable negative effects that would surely occur if the WHTI comes into reality.

What does the loss of \$150 million a year mean to northwestern Ontario? It will be hugely detrimental. I do not want to use the big negatives like catastrophic, but please do the math. This is a very heavy and consistent drain of an economic multiplier. Not only will it be full time people, but students, part timers, everybody will be hurt, including our national image. What business could sustain such hits year after year?

People in organizations in the Rainy River district, which became part of my riding in the last election, recently decided to stop complaining and do something effective. We had a meeting with everyone concerned. All parties dealing with border crossings came together and the positive and cooperative attitude was excellent.

With the assistance of the Rainy River Futures Development Corporation, we designed and built a visitor-friendly website to make it easier for Americans to visit us. Every time tourist operators are faced with an inquiry from Americans, they know now exactly what they can or cannot bring, what the legal implications of their criminal records may be and how to overcome them.

Government Orders

Currently, a study is underway, helped by the province of Ontario, to get some more finely tuned answers as to why the Americans have stopped coming. We know one thing that we will find from this. The answers that will come from this study also will tell Canadians why they will not be interested in going back to the United States if the border gets tougher to cross.

This example proves what we can do and what we can achieve if we work to find solutions. We could apply this to a two way plan. We have to prove to our American neighbours that we are presenting viable solutions, not making more difficult problems.

On October 31, which I believe is the deadline for submissions, I hope our government, with the combination of people from all parties, support what we have to do. We cannot tell a sovereign nation how to write its legislation, but we can show from example that we are first and foremost a friendly, supportive nation. We saw how extremely effective the Mexican proposal was. Its tourist pitch was "Closer Than Ever", and that resulted in millions of new visitors to Mexico after 9/11. We know that the potential is there.

● (2000)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to refer first to the comments made during the last question and comment session directed toward my colleague from the NDP, by the member for Pickering—Scarborough East. He was concerned that I and some others might be getting too partisan.

The Liberal member who just spoke talked about his support for the mayor from the United States who suggested an initiative for border communities, both from the United States and Canada, to get together to discuss issues such as the passport issue and other issues of mutual concern. That would be a great thing. However, the hon. member from the Liberal caucus has made the point we have tried to make. Where is the leadership on this issue? The member for Pickering—Scarborough East does not want us to get partisan, but there is no leadership. We have yet to hear the Prime Minister speak on this issue.

Earlier another Liberal member made a comment on the fact that he had not heard one question in question period on this. I hope Canadians are watching this tonight. I hope they realize the leadership in the Liberal Party is all about that. If the opposition does not ask a question in question period, it must not be important. That is the Liberals idea of leadership. The Prime Minister cannot possibly take a position on this or communicate to the Americans, even though there is only one week left before the comment period on the initiative expires.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Not at all.

Mr. Jay Hill: Who is heckling now? This is great tonight.

The Prime Minister fails to take a leadership position. My colleague from the Liberal Party is well intentioned in his support of border communities. It is a great idea. However, I do not think it would be necessary for border communities. This is not something that only affects his community in Thunder Bay. It is not something that only affects Windsor, or Niagara Falls or Vancouver or Sumac. This is something that affects the nation. Should there not be some national leadership on this?

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Mr. Chair, first a minor correction. Fort Frances is a Canadian community. I understand we cannot know all our geography, but it is a very important community in northwestern Ontario.

The degree of cooperation with the American people also has been very exemplary. Indeed a senator from the United States has been involved, and they have been calling meetings themselves to garner Canadian support against the proposal.

The member talks about leadership. I was quite pleased to see the number of initiatives both from Foreign Affairs and our Prime Minister on this issue, and his personal interventions with the President. That came through loud and clear from our Minnesota neighbours. They were pleased for the Canadian support from our leadership, so perhaps I must have missed something earlier.

Second, if border communities could come together to facilitate some of these things that would reinforce what can be done at a national level and it would be most positive.

● (2005)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Chair, as much as I admire the member from Thunder Bay, I am having problems with his approach. It is perhaps overly Pollyannaish. I do not know if he will appreciate this, but I do have this question for him on the provision for the three phases of passport requirements.

The first is for members from the Caribbean and the rest of the western hemisphere, excluding Mexico and Canada. That comes into effect in about two months' time. That is legislated. A year later, anybody travelling by sea and air from Mexico and Canada will require a passport. That also is legislated. In January 2008, everybody going in by land, sea, or air will be required, by legislation in the U.S., to have passports.

As for these initiatives of working with our local communities, we all do that. I am from Windsor. On an ongoing basis, we have a significant working relationship with the city of Detroit and any number of smaller communities on the other side of the border.

But there is nothing those communities can do: this is federal legislation. This requires the President of the United States and the Congress and the Senate to change the law. There is nothing we can do. I wonder if my colleague understands that. I wonder if he has any other suggestions as to how we do this without getting directly to the President of the United States, the senators and the congressmen in the U.S. for legislation to repeal these provisions or at least delay them.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Mr. Chair, I understand the phasing very well. I also understand very well the economics of what this will mean to an American family. Yes, their passport terms are 10 years as opposed to our 5 years. I also understand how expensive it is for American families coming this way. I would think that the price Canadians will have to pay for passports to go there will have to be addressed, perhaps in future budgets. There is an option there for us too.

As was mentioned, there are other alternatives, not the least of which are recent examples which have shown there is some potential that may make it not so onerous.

Government Orders

For all of these questions, I would ask, as someone from the NDP would, where does change begin? When we can show that these border communities that are most directly affected can, at the community level, show their governments what the impact is, then I think there will be some pressure and some success and it will be effective.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Chair, I paid a great deal of attention to the comments of the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River. He said among other things that mayors have taken initiatives on this. I know that he has been very involved with municipal politics and certainly we on this side of the House applaud that. We are happy when we hear that mayors are taking initiatives.

He also said that we have to take a page from one of the programs on the southern border of the United States, with Mexico, in terms of encouraging Americans, but let me ask the member this: how much encouragement can we give when we know that more has to be done at the border?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety said he has not heard any questions being asked about this. I will tell him to check *Hansard*, because I certainly asked his minister a question as to what was being done about the unscheduled labour disruptions that were taking place at the border.

I pointed out to the minister at that time that four disruptions had taken place just this past summer. Border guards walked off the job because of security concerns and shut down the border. I asked the minister if we were going to have to wait until there were 40 of these shutdowns before the government would take action on this.

I challenged her then, but I have to raise the matter again because the same thing happened today. At 2 o'clock at the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie, border guards walked off the job. The parliamentary secretary will be aware of this because he must get intelligence briefings from across the country. As we speak, the traffic is backed up for miles. People cannot get into Canada.

Who should be doing something about this? Should we tell the mayors to get together and figure this out? Should we say that this is a tourism issue and we should advertise better?

It seems to me that we need leadership to settle some of these issues to make the borders work better. If members do not believe me or if they think the borders are working well, I challenge anybody to check what I just mentioned about the Niagara Peninsula and the Peace Bridge. As we speak this very day, the border guards have walked off the job because of security concerns and that has the traffic backed up for miles.

Let me ask the hon. member this: how much confidence should we place in the leadership of his government when this is taking place? This has been a continuous problem and the government has not yet dealt with the issue. Could he address that, please?

● (2010)

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Mr. Chair, the hon. member for Niagara probably has more vehicle crossings in a month than we do in a year at all three of our crossings. The commercial aspect for him and his riding is probably more important in terms of total quantity and value, although for our three crossings, forestry, softwood lumber and all of those types of things become very significant in terms of

delay and pace. There is no doubt that commercially it is very significant. It is the same as our cross-country highway system.

When we try to look at these as solvable issues, when I think about it I am not going to give a stock answer and say that we are working on it and it is going to get done. I am going to say that I take it at face value and it is something that has to be improved. It clearly has to be more of a priority and has value in terms of the nature of the question. I will say respectfully to the hon. member that I believe we probably can do more and we will do more. I am certain that we must.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Chair, we are actually debating the United States Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. Let me say for the folks back home that this is the passport initiative. "Passport" is the operative word on this.

I want to remind the listening public and the members of this House that for those travelling by air the necessity or requirement for a passport or some other document which has not yet been invented will kick in and the document will be needed as of December 31, 2006. For those travelling by land, it will be required by December 31, 2007.

In a sense, the debate really is not about a bill or an initiative that the Government of Canada is taking, because this clearly is a bill or an initiative taken by the government of the United States. There is no question about that. The issue is that there will be serious implications for Canada.

The Government of Canada has had plenty of notice concerning this travel initiative, as the parliamentary secretary noted. It sounds quite innocent, does it not, this "travel initiative"? It sounds as if the U.S. is encouraging travel when it talks about a travel initiative. However, this initiative will restrict travel. This initiative was passed by the government of the United States in December 2004. I know I am accurate on that number because the government has also mentioned that date.

The Canadian government has had time to do something. Our argument is that the Government of Canada has done nothing.

It is important for us to focus on the time element, because with any legislation in the United States there is a 60 day comment period during which private citizens or industry can comment on a bill or an initiative undertaken by government. It is what the U.S. government calls the implementation period.

We are arguing that the comment period on this particular bill ends on October 31. It is now October 24. There is one week to go and the Prime Minister has not been heard publicly on this issue at all. The government has known for well over a year that this was coming. There have been plenty of signals out there, but the government has done absolutely nothing.

Government Orders

One thing mentioned by the member from Thunder Bay was a meeting. I am quoting the member from Thunder Bay, who said that the Prime Minister had personal intervention with the President of the United States on this issue. We heard him say that. I would like to know where that was and when it was, because I believe the member is wrong on that. If the member is correct or if he does know that date and where it happened, he would be the only one in this House, because his ministers do not know and his parliamentary secretaries do not know.

I would suggest that this imaginary meeting that was held was something like the meeting that our former prime minister, Mr. Chrétien, had with the homeless guy down the street. It was simply a figment of his imagination. This never occurred. I am suggesting that this is exactly what the member from Thunder Bay is referring to: an event that never happened. That is exactly what this argument and debate is all about: inaction by the Government of Canada on an issue that is going to have huge consequences for the Canadian economy.

Not only those of us in opposition are speaking this way. Industry is speaking that way, from Windsor to British Columbia, all across this country and in all parts of this country. All premiers are speaking that way. The member from Windsor quoted some of the premiers. Every premier in Canada is saying, "This is going to have grave consequences. Please stand up, Prime Minister, and do something now while we have an opportunity".

A week ago I stood in this place and asked for an emergency debate on this issue. For some reason, the Chair declined that word "emergency" in regard to the debate. That was declined. Thank goodness our House leader was strong enough to drive this hard enough at the House leaders' meeting so that we do have a take note debate.

● (2015)

There are some limitations on that. Just think about it. The Liberals have had a year to deal with this. Now we are down to the last seven days and there is a pathetic turnout on the government side. I am not identifying individual members of Parliament but I am saying that I do not think the turnout on the government side is very impressive.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Point of order.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Chair, there are no points of order here, as we well know. We are on the—

The Deputy Chair: Order. On a point of order, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Chair, making reference to whether or not other members in the House are here is totally unacceptable. The member is suggesting that the government somehow does not have representation here when the hon. member knows full well it is extremely proportional to what the composition of the House is. We do not make reference to other members of Parliament and certainly not their attendance here this evening at such an important debate, which the government takes seriously.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Chair, it is time for the government side to regain its composure.

The fact is that this initiative is very hurtful to Canada. Three weeks ago when the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary meetings took place in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, every Republican and every Democrat from the United States of America at that meeting told us that the legislation was ill considered and not well thought out. Believe it or not, every Liberal, Conservative, NDP and Bloc member agreed that this is not good legislation, that it will be hurtful to both economies.

We have heard the numbers. There are 300,000 individual crossings a day between the two countries, 300,000 a day. The one industry we focused on was the tourism industry. We can say with accuracy that it is going to cost the tourism industry \$2 billion and counting the first year.

What they are talking about in terms of requirements means that 250 million Americans will have to have a passport or some other document within the next year and a half. Thirty million Canadians will require the same document, as will 100 million Mexicans. How the Prime Minister could have missed this one is beyond my belief.

Every day in the House, Mr. Chair, and you have gone through this time and time again in your position in the chair, we have routine proceedings. During routine proceedings when statements by ministers are called, Mr. Chair, do you recall the Prime Minister of Canada actually standing to inform Parliament on this issue? Has any other minister?

Mr. Jay Hill: The Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Greg Thompson: The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, we could go through a roster of ministers but the Prime Minister is the guy in charge and not one of them has ever been on his or her feet in the House to inform Parliament. This debate should have taken place a year ago.

Is that not the problem with the Liberal government? For the last 12 years going on 13 the Liberals never know when to say yes or no to the Americans. This is one time the Prime Minister should have said, "This is wrong. It is going to hurt your economy and it is going to hurt ours", and be heard on it. He was in New York two weeks ago. The New York power brokers were listening. In fact, he met with the editorial board of *The New York Times* and did not even mention this issue.

That goes back to the infamous meeting between the Prime Minister and the President that did not happen. There is no evidence out there that they ever met on this issue. I would ask the government member who stated that to retract it and to apologize to the House and the Canadian people. The government has fallen asleep on this file. It is going to wreak havoc on the Canadian economy. We are asking it to do something and to do it fast.

● (2020)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Chair, I appreciated the comments by the member for New Brunswick Southwest. He has worked hard on the Canada-U.S. Parliamentary Association.

Government Orders

We have had a number of opportunities to take about border issues and also reflect upon what his area has had to go through to procure a new crossing versus my area which even today is in a quagmire.

It is amazing. The most important border crossing in North America is controlled by a private American citizen who has a billion dollars annually in revenue, according to *Forbes* magazine, and is looking to consolidate all of the customs people on the American side and the government provides \$13 million in subsidy per year for those customs people.

I would like to ask the hon. member about the impact on tourism that he thinks this will have across the country.

Back in 2003 there were 577,000 jobs directly related to tourism. This is going to have a profound impact on the hotel and restaurant industries. I would like to get his reflections on that, not only in terms of the major urban centres but also in terms of some of the smaller border crossings that still rely on people who go back and forth across the border daily and who may not necessarily cross the border any more because they will have to have a passport.

It is important to note that it is not just Canadians who will have to have a passport. Americans will have to have a passport to get back into their country.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Chair, I cannot relate this to jobs, but we could do the math. Two billion dollars would be the cost to the tourism industry the first year of implementation. If we do the math, it is simply thousands of jobs lost if this initiative continues on the path that we think it is going, unless the Government of Canada can stand up and help us change the minds of the Americans.

We have all mentioned the convention business and so on, but one of the things I want to mention is that this country of ours is pretty complicated. It is a big country and the border situations that will be faced by individual provinces and individual members of Parliament are pretty unique. We all have our own personal examples.

One example I want to use of how it will have an impact on the people that we represent is the area of Campobello Island. Campobello Island is in the Bay of Fundy and can only be accessed by travelling through mainland United States.

I think I am correct in claiming that I am the only member of Parliament who has to travel through a foreign land to get to part of his riding, which is Campobello Island. It is about an hour and a half by road to get to Campobello Island. It is connected by bridge to mainland United States. We could get there by boat but it is mostly impracticable for most of the year. We have done it, but most of the time we rely, as every citizen would, on going into mainland United States. It would mean that every citizen on that island would require a passport to go for basic necessities like gasoline. There are no gasoline stations on that island. There is no hospital on that island. For most of the drugs and medical services the people have to go to the mainland.

The situation could arise where in the middle of night a 95-year-old woman who is deathly sick in the nursing home on Campobello Island had to go to the hospital in Machias, Maine. How would she get across the border without a passport if this is implemented? How many 95-year-old citizens have passports?

Another example would be school teens. Campobello Island takes great pride in its basketball teams. Great basketball players have gone through the system on Campobello Island. If a basketball team is travelling to some other school in Canada, every one of those students, all the players and the coaches, including the bus driver, would need a passport to get off of the island to go through mainland United States to get to some other part of Canada and back home.

This has not been thought through. That is why the Prime Minister of Canada has to stand up and be heard on this issue, and heard very strongly.

Here is another example. If American citizens left the United States and got into Canada without a passport, how would they get back home? They would be refugees in Canada, Americans unable to get back into their home states. This is something that American senators and congressmen actually talk about. Think about it. One of the most prominent senators in the United States, Hillary Clinton, the wife of a former president and who I think wants to be president herself, admits that this kind of slipped by them. In fact, most of the senators and congressmen who actually voted for this legislation now openly admit that they made a huge mistake.

I think it is up to us to point out to the Americans that this has to be fixed. Canada is important to the Americans. It is time that the Prime Minister understood that. It is time that he went down to Washington immediately and talked with those parliamentarians, with those senators and congressmen in the United States. I used the term "parliamentarians", but obviously it is a congressional system, a presidential government.

● (2025)

However, the truth is that the Prime Minister has to take this seriously. We have seven more days before the comment period actually expires. We had better make our case as strongly and forcibly as we can to the United States of America and be strong enough to stand up and say that this will not work, and to please reconsider it. We should provide some suggestions to see if we can do it together and make our economies work.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, there was a meeting that the member for New Brunswick Southwest may have missed, but judging from his comments today here in the House, he has probably missed a lot of things. It was the meeting in Waco, Texas, where the Prime Minister of Canada met with President George Bush and President Vicente Fox of Mexico. The whole purpose of the meeting was to discuss security and document integrity. Out of that came the security and prosperity initiative. I was not at the meeting, but it would be a fairly good assumption that this matter we are debating tonight came up in the context of that meeting.

The member's colleague from Niagara talked about some of these work refusals that have been happening at the border. Today we had some more. The reality is that every time this has happened, an independent occupational health committee or Labour Canada has ruled that there is actually no risk posed to these border officers.

Government Orders

I am not a labour lawyer, but I am wondering when this happens repeatedly, is there not a cause to be made to the Labour Relations Board that this proposition has been tested time and time again. There is no security risk to these officers based on an independent assessment. At what time would the Labour Relations Board take that into account and say enough is enough? I do not know if the member opposite has practised labour law, but could he perhaps comment on that?

• (2030)

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Chair, fortunately or unfortunately, I am not a lawyer, so I did not practice labour law and everyone is probably sighing a breath of relief that I probably have not and did not. The fact is that we have to focus on the issue tonight. The issue tonight is on this passport initiative, this western hemisphere travel initiative.

We do not want to get off the subject. This is just poorly thought out legislation. When the member talks about the meeting that took place between Mr. Bush, Mr. Fox and our Prime Minister, that legislation was already passed. I have never seen any report where the Prime Minister of Canada pushed that heavily in that agenda, but I could be wrong on that one. We will have to wait and see what the Prime Minister has to say about it. I am sure that he will show up probably later on this evening and have a word to say about that issue.

However, the Liberals have sadly let Canadians down on this issue and have missed the boat. Unfortunately, we are going to pay a heavy price as a country in terms of our trading relations with the Americans unless the Prime Minister takes this issue seriously and makes some serious interventions in Washington with the President of the United States.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak about the Government of Canada's border security initiatives and more specifically our integrated approach to border management. It is take note debates like this that are useful, where members can present to their constituents that they are very active on these matters and that the government is listening. With the exception of the member for Prince George—Peace River, there has been a lot of constructive comment that the government will be examining, I am sure.

[*Translation*]

The present government has adopted a strategic position with its U.S. partners, based on initiatives such as the smart border declaration and the more recent North American security and prosperity partnership, in order to continue to make considerable progress toward our common objectives of public safety and economic security.

[*English*]

Ensuring the security of the border is in our mutual best interests. Canada is currently engaged in efforts to enhance and further secure travel documents.

Members opposite talk about inaction. The comment that President Bush made on the steps of the White House did not go unnoticed here in Canada. The statements by Ms. Clinton and by the

governor of New York, Mr. Pataki, have not gone unnoticed. There has been a tremendous amount of effort through our consuls general to the United States and also at the officials level to come up with a workable solution to this matter.

As the House knows, the United States introduced legislation referred to as the western hemisphere travel initiative, which is what we are discussing tonight. It will require that all individuals travelling to the U.S., all individuals including U.S. citizens, present a passport or another secure document effective in 2007. I can assure members that the Government of Canada has been consulting stakeholders in Canada and the United States and U.S. government officials at every level on this initiative.

Ultimately, our goal is to keep terrorists and other criminal elements out and allow legitimate trade and travellers to move smoothly across the border. However, we share some of the concerns, as I said, of Senator Hillary Clinton, New York State Governor George Pataki and others in the United States about how the western hemisphere travel initiative is moving ahead too quickly and without the proper consideration of other options.

This issue is much too important to rush through. The border operates in a real time environment, providing service at air, sea and land ports of entry 24 hours a day, seven days a week at some of its busiest locations. This enables us to deal more quickly and effectively with trade and security concerns here at home and abroad. In real terms, this meant that last year, the Canada Border Services Agency processed close to 95 million travellers. This means 71 million people and 37 million vehicles by highway, 20 million by air, and 12 million commercial releases. Many Canadian industries now participate in programs to streamline the border clearance process for pre-approved, low risk travellers and goods.

I would like to briefly outline some of the excellent programs that both enhance safety and security at the U.S.-Canada border and ensure that commerce and trade are not jeopardized. As members will see, there is a long tradition of working together with our counterparts and I am sure this will continue as we cooperate on ensuring the security of documents used by those crossing the Canada-U.S. border.

First of all, the free and secure trade program, or FAST, is a harmonized commercial process offered to pre-approved importers, carriers and registered drivers to facilitate clearance into either Canada or the United States with greater speed and certainty. Frequent cross-border travellers can also take advantage of NEXUS, a binational program that both simplifies border transit and reduces wait times.

Government Orders

CANPASS Air has been implemented at seven international airports using iris recognition technology to streamline our travel. CANPASS Air allows its members to expedite their own border clearance quickly and securely. When CANPASS Air was implemented at Vancouver International Airport in July 2003, this was the first time in North America that iris recognition technology was used to facilitate a traveller's border clearance. Now travellers flying into Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Calgary can also clear customs and immigration in the blink of an eye.

• (2035)

[*Translation*]

This partnership agreement is one more fine example of the close collaboration that exists between Canada and the U.S. to ensure the security and prosperity of our two countries.

[*English*]

These and other accomplishments reflect the multiple border strategy and the effort to interdict high risk travellers and cargo before they arrive in Canada. To that end, we work closely with our partners and deploy mitigation integrity officers overseas. These officers work with airlines and local authorities, share intelligence, detect document fraud and interrupt the flow of illegal migrants, criminals and persons with terrorist links before they board a plane for Canada.

This multilayered approach to smart border management recognizes that the border is more than a single line at which threats must be intercepted. This concept of pushing the border out includes multiple levels of screening with information-gathering at all the checkpoints along the line. Many of our initiatives use advanced technologies that increase the speed and accuracy of identification, so we can quickly process those we know and trust. This lets us focus on high risk arrivals, whether terrorists or criminals, that put our personal and national security at risk and undermine the confidence of our trading partners.

As members can see, our cooperation in these areas has been very successful. We have put in place a range of programs that expedite the passage of pre-cleared travellers and goods, allowing the Canada Border Services Agency and U.S. customs and border protection to focus on high risk cases. A large part of the success of these programs has been the fact that we took the time to evaluate all of the options to ensure that the best one was chosen.

Although I would urge the United States government to reconsider the western hemisphere travel initiative specifically, I cannot stress enough that I share the concerns of our American friends with regard to border security.

[*Translation*]

We will continue to expand existing programs and plan new initiatives to make it still safer for people and goods to move across the border as well as to coordinate and share information.

[*English*]

The initiatives and examples I have outlined this evening show that the Government of Canada has taken significant measures to

keep our borders secure and to ensure economic security and public safety all the while working with our American partners.

As we move forward, key objectives for border security will be making the best use of technology to enhance border security; devising an integrated global enrolment program for North American trusted travellers for travel by air, land and sea to encompass programs such as NEXUS and CANPASS; pushing the borders out to secure North America from threats by further harmonizing systems and processes; collaborating in the development of automated risk assessment systems, tools and methods and improving infrastructure and border processing times.

In the spirit of partnership we believe this is the best way for our two countries to proceed if we wish to improve security and efficiency at the border and if we wish to preserve the unique cross border relationships that are so central to our prosperity. I wish to emphasize that we share the same objectives as the United States. What is up for debate are processes and mechanisms.

• (2040)

[*Translation*]

In order to optimize risk management and the protection of our citizens, our economy and our society, we must be able to anticipate, and better prepared to handle, any risk or danger that might occur at the border.

[*English*]

Canada and the United States must continue to work together to strengthen the foundations for establishing both identity and citizenship in our respective passport issuance processes. However, we need to ensure that we are choosing the best option to improve both security and the free flow of goods and people at the border. We need to take the time to get this right.

I am aware that many in the House have been very active and engaged on the western hemisphere travel initiative. There has been action at different levels of government at the officials level. I know that many of my colleagues on this side and many colleagues on that side of the House have been talking to U.S. congressmen and congresswomen and senators and other officials in the United States.

I can tell the House that our government is working very actively on this issue. One of the ways I have done this is by facilitating input from my constituents and other Canadians on this initiative to U.S. and Canadian officials.

As some members may know, I sent a letter to all parliamentarians on Monday of last week detailing how members of both the House and the other place could make their views known. I encourage all members to take advantage of the opportunity to apprise officials both here and in the United States of their opinions on how we can best move together to arrive at the best form of travel documentation required for cross border travel.

Government Orders

Given our close history, shared values and numerous successes in managing our border together, I am sure members would agree that we need not sacrifice prosperity at the altar of security.

I would like to emphasize that Canada and the United States have committed to deepen cooperation in North America and in the world, to work bilaterally to address shared priorities, and to continue our close cooperation with Mexico on issues of trilateral importance. This will continue to set the course to ensure the security, prosperity and the quality of life of our citizens.

This issue of travel documentation at the border, however it is resolved, I am hopeful will be the right solution, continuing in the spirit of goodwill and cooperation which has marked our progress on border issues since the 9/11 tragedy.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be brief because there are at least two other members on the opposition side who would like to ask our Liberal colleague a question.

We heard about some supposed personal interventions that were made on behalf of the Canadian government and Canadians who were concerned about the issue by the Prime Minister to the President of the United States. We have no real proof of that. We will take their word for it. I guess it has actually happened.

The parliamentary secretary has said that he sent out a letter about a week ago. Ironically enough, that letter would have coincided with the request for an emergency debate, not a take note debate, on this very issue by my colleague from New Brunswick Southwest. Suddenly on that very day the parliamentary secretary was prompted to some action and he sent out a letter suggesting that everybody had two weeks to get their comments in. That is the type of leadership we have come to expect from the Liberal government.

The United States Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, is in Canada right now. She is fairly high placed with the administration. Could the parliamentary secretary assure us that when the Prime Minister met with her today he raised this issue? If so, what was the reaction and what was said?

Could he bring some information to the debate tonight? If not, will he at least follow the lead of the opposition yet again and commit to raising it tomorrow? My understanding is she will be around then too.

● (2045)

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Chair, my answer to the member for Prince George—Peace River is I have it on pretty good authority that this was on the agenda for the Prime Minister to raise with the Secretary of State from the United States, Condoleezza Rice. I am not privy as to whether that has taken place at this point in time or how the discussions went.

As I said earlier, that the Deputy Prime Minister raised this many months ago with Homeland Security Secretary, Mr. Michael Chertoff. There have been many discussions back and forth.

The letter that I sent, I think he impugns more motive than was there. The member for Prince George—Peace River is not adjacent to a border. However, the members on this side and many members on the other side who are border MPs have engaged on this in a very

big way. There is still time for that kind of consultation and those commentaries to come in.

We will be presenting a very strong and unified position when the consultation period ends, if it does end at the end of October, which is the plan right now.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Chair, I heard something in my colleague's speech which gave me some discomfort. He said that the government's position right now was to ask the United States to reconsider doing this. That is not very strong given the fact that Ms. Rice is in Ottawa. I imagine that it would be a terrific embarrassment to the Prime Minister to have a take note debate in the Nation's Capital at a time when Ms. Rice is in town on an issue that he did not bother to raise at the table. The member who brought this issue to the floor of the House tonight deserves credit because it puts him in the necessary position of doing something.

Last Saturday in Halifax the Council of State Governments at its regional conference unanimously passed a motion that asked the U. S. to delay the western hemisphere travel initiative until better options could be found. It has come out even stronger than the government.

The government should provide us with a specific strategy with respect to our tourism industry. The government produced a document prior to July which was posted on the Internet. What specific strategies are in place for the tourism industry across the country if this goes through and we suffer significant consequences on the Canadian side as a result of that? What specific items will the government unveil? According to the government, a lot of work has been done on this.

The government has supposedly been discussing this for a number of years and has made representations through different formats. I would only assume then that it would have a back up plan. Where is the blueprint? When is the public going to see the plan? When can I talk to the tourism people from downtown business improvement association about that blueprint and what they can expect? When can I talk to my municipality about what it can expect?

What can the provincial government expect when the casino industry or the bingo industry and the people who rely upon the funds derived from the Americans who come here are affected by this? What about all our restaurateurs? What can they expect from the government to offset the economic hardship that will come as a result of this?

Research is available showing what the effects of this will be or is it all bunk in the Liberal's opinion? Where is the back up? When are we going to see it?

● (2050)

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Chair, the member for Windsor West is more pessimistic than those of us on this side of the House.

There is a process involved here. The government will formally present its views at the end of October, after consulting with stakeholders, including the tourism industry and many other stakeholders in Canada. Prior to that, a conversation will take place between the Deputy Prime Minister and the U.S. Homeland Security Secretary.

Government Orders

There are some issues in play in the sense of needing more time. Different options could be considered other than a passport, but it takes time to evaluate those other options and test them out. I would not want to reveal at this point what the government's formal position will be at the end of this month, but it is under preparation. Time is needed to look at other options beyond passports.

To take the proposition right off the table would be an option as well. We have to be realistic about what the options are. That is why the government has been consulting with stakeholders. That is why the U.S. Consul General of the United States has been making representations in the United States.

If members opposite have some constructive ideas, they should feed them to us and the government will consider them as well.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Chair, I listened with interest and I always look for constructive ideas from the parliamentary secretary.

His has said that the Liberals have established cooperation with United States customs and that had been successful, and I am happy for that. They have established good relations with United States customs. Would it be unreasonable to suggest that the government might want to establish good relationships with Canada Customs and Canada Customs border guards? Am I being unreasonable when I suggest that?

The parliamentary secretary put a question to the member for New Brunswick Southwest. I raised the matter a little earlier. I said that there were four unscheduled work stoppages in the Niagara area alone, never mind the rest of the country. I pointed out there had been another one today. Yet he put the question to the member for New Brunswick Southwest and asked him for a legal opinion and asked if there was enough.

I can speak for him. Yes, there has been enough. We are convinced. There are labour problems. People are worried about their security at the borders. A report by one of their colleagues in the Liberal Party, "Borderline Insecure", raised some of these security questions. All I am asking the parliamentary secretary and the government to do is to sit down with our unions and border guards and get some of these issues resolved. We cannot afford to have these unscheduled work stoppages.

The parliamentary secretary wants lots of ideas, and we will do that when we are in government. However, while the parliamentary secretary is in government, he should do something about these things and get these issues settled. We cannot afford to have this sort of thing happen any more.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Chair, the member for Niagara Falls knows full well that each time the border officers have raised the issue about security, it has been reviewed by an independent panel. What we are doing at the border is consistent with the labour code. There is not a security risk. I will not get into sensitive labour and management issues, but the member opposite knows that many of the border officers would like to have handguns. The independent assessment of that is they are not required.

The government will be assessing what happened today with the Canada Border Services Agency. I agree with him that this kind of work stoppage is not very constructive or useful. The options will be

reviewed. This has been reviewed four or five times by an independent panel and it has said it is not a security risk. The government has to take that into account in terms of developing its action plan from here on in.

● (2055)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Chair, tonight, what I would have expected to hear from my colleague opposite is the *raison d'être* for what seems to me to be a strange requirement from the United States that all people going through the border have a passport by 2007. I would have expected some explanations on the security needs. I do not see why one should be required to have a passport for security reasons. Personally, I think that, if someone wanted to go through Canada to get to the United States to commit terrorist acts, since a passport would be required, he would have all the passports necessary.

What I see missing in this dialogue between Canada and the United States is an attempt to explain the true nature of the relations that have always existed at the border between Americans and not only Quebecers, but also Ontarians and other Canadians.

There is in this American position something resembling a lack of confidence toward Canada. I would have liked to hear my colleague opposite talk further on this issue. I heard him say that, at the border, means to move trucks and business people more rapidly had been devised. However, the essence of a border resides not only in economic relations, but also neighbourly relations. We cannot think that, in the current world, in this context of globalization, passports would be required to go from Canada to the United States and vice versa and this, for security reasons.

I heard some colleagues say that this would be terrible for tourism, that it would be difficult for the economy and it would reduce considerably the number of Americans coming to Quebec and Canada and vice versa. Why should a passport be required? I am convinced that all the arguments have not been made.

Frankly, I am glad the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice is here. As an aside, when I read in the *Toronto Star* that Ms. Rice had travelled extensively before coming to Ottawa, I thought that this too could not be attributable solely to the position Canada took on the war in Iraq. We are neighbours. This border is thousands of kilometres long. In many places along this border, there is no one to see whether people have passports, if passports ever become mandatory, which I think we could and should avoid.

Much has been made of economic arguments, but I want to come back to the argument of being a good neighbour. We can take different positions on the important challenges between Canada and the United States.

● (2100)

The fact remains that these are two neighbouring countries in a world not only of trade, but also of travel. We cannot consider requiring passports.

Government Orders

Many of you often travel to Europe. You have seen the Schengen accords. In Europe, a continent where the risks we are referring to this evening are no less present, countries trust each other and have agreement mechanisms. The Schengen accords cover more than 13 countries and these accords are expected to be broadened.

We live in a global village where young and old are neighbours. It is a world in which we vacation, travel and visit. In this world, between neighbours especially, passports are not an item that the average citizen will obtain in order to travel to the United States, Quebec or Canada.

Requiring and accepting passports would be to accept a barrier. This border between Canada and the United States has never been considered as such. It was not an obstacle. I remember when I was young and even more recently and we would cross the border for two or three days and come back and the Americans would do the same.

The member opposite said that there had been several panels and that it was never determined that there were any security issues associated with such a request. There could certainly be panels. This may not be directly connected to my responsibilities, but I would like to see that, because it seems to me that this is what we have to rely on. There is no security problem between Canada and the United States.

We all remember that, following the events of September 11, what was discussed was more along the lines of a security perimeter, some sort of Schengen area. Why are there no more discussions about this perimeter negotiated with Mexico? This would enable us to maintain borders that are not impenetrable barriers, except with a passport. I think that people have to get out of their heads the idea that ordinary citizens in the U.S., Quebec and Canada will get passports to take a Sunday drive across the border, as I said, in the name of good neighbourliness. Much has been said about the economic impact, but my focus is on these good neighbourliness conditions.

The proposals suggest that, at the very least, the decision be postponed so that alternatives can be found. Yes, indeed, efforts should be made to have the decision postponed in the hope that it will be different.

The U.S. Secretary of State, who is very influential in the U.S., is a woman who hears and perceives many things. My hope is that, on the basis of this evidence that there are no security issues involved, she will understand that, aside from the issue of participation in the war in Iraq, there is on this side of the border—I can speak for all of Quebec at least—great sympathy for our neighbour country.

• (2105)

It seems to me that requiring a passport would sever our current good neighbourliness relations and turn them into something very different. The losses would not be only economic ones.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île for her comments.

It is important to point out that this is a decision for the government of the United States, not the Government of Canada.

Does the hon. member realize that the passport requirement is not just for Canadians, but for Americans as well? They have to present a passport in order to return to the U.S.

[*English*]

Maybe the member could comment on that and also on the question of perimeter. It becomes a very laden concept. It depends on one's point of view and how one defines "perimeter" as a concept.

I know the member is well versed in matters of sovereignty. One of the issues is that if we have a perimeter, we might have to give up certain sovereign policies, or we would have to harmonize with the United States and perhaps Mexico. I am wondering if that is something the member has thought about. Would she have any concerns about that? How would she see that playing out?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Chair, we have reflected on the matters on which we feel negotiation is possible. Take immigration policies as an example, Canada and Quebec would have different positions than the U.S., but negotiation does seem possible.

Moreover, I imagine that the parliamentary secretary agrees with me that agreement on this is possible. I think he agrees with that. I had understood, and thought I had said that I understood, that the American policy required both U.S. and Canadian citizens to have passports. This does, however, result in a considerable and fundamental change to the good neighbours relationship.

I am not sure that that is clearly understood by the President and his people. It means far more than changed economic relations. Businessmen and major companies are able to find the means to deal with it. It does, however, really change the ability of ordinary U.S. citizens, small businessmen and ordinary people in Quebec and in Canada to make friendly visits. These are people who live on the opposite sides of a border, in different countries, but as neighbours. This is one aspect that strikes me as extremely important.

I hope that together we will be able to convince them that this must not change and that, on the contrary, their neighbour is important. Neighbourliness is not possible everywhere. A neighbour is someone you know well, someone who is different but with whom you share common knowledge. Your characters may be different, but you know each other well. Good neighbourly relations are important.

Together, we can convince the United States that this would change things considerably. I will repeat what I said at the beginning. If anyone wanted to go through Canada to get to the United States to commit terrorist acts, we can be sure that, if passports were required, they would have them.

Government Orders

• (2110)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Chair, one of the comments that the parliamentary secretary made related to the fact that this is American legislation and it would seem that he was attempting to distance the government's responsibility to comment or be involved.

I know that is not the case on an ordinary basis where, for example, we have communities that are engaged in lobbying efforts and are active on many different files. I know that the mayor of the city of Windsor is going to Washington on Wednesday to deal with this issue because there seems to be a void. He is going to promote the local interests in terms of the aspects of how it is going to be played out if this initiative is implemented.

The President of the United States has expressed reservations and some kind of disbelief about this, as have many of the American legislatures. They have talked about retraction and about being potentially in haste. Some have signed letters and petitions. Others have been very proficient at getting the message out, doing joint non-partisan or bi-partisan efforts to raise attention to this. Is that not the opportunity or opening for the Prime Minister to finally state that this is wrong for Canada, wrong for the United States, wrong for both of us together, and that we need to seek another solution?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chair, that was my understanding. In fact, I said so in my remarks. It is suggested that, strategically, the decision should be postponed. But it seems to me that, if it is postponed, this will mean that we will no longer be talking about that decision.

We must be clear on this. The changes made would be too extensive for that to be easily allowed. I know that there are non-partisan efforts on all sides to preserve these cross-border relations. These have to be enhanced.

My colleague from Saint-jean, who represents a border riding, met with people in the United States. They told him that we had to join forces to prevent the border from becoming a barrier which would alter not only our economic relationship—that is a given—but also the neighbourly relations, knowledge and understanding between the Americans on one side and Quebecers and Canadians on the other side.

Tonight's debate must not stop here. It has to continue with steps that have yet to be determined. Someone talked about strategy earlier. We do need a strategy to postpone this initiative. Our true intention has to be to prevent this passport requirement, on both sides of the border, from becoming a reality and being imposed at the expense of Quebecers, Canadians and Americans.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Chair, one of the issues that I raised earlier in the debate tonight, out of concern not only for myself but indeed for all members of Parliament from all four political parties, is the lack of resources that the federal government is committing to the passport office itself. I wonder whether my colleague from the Bloc Québécois is experiencing

similar difficulties than I am up in the rural riding of Prince George—Peace River in northeastern British Columbia.

We do not have a passport office that is close by. We have a lot of physical impediments. My riding straddles the Rocky Mountains. It is very difficult for constituents to get the assistance that they need to ensure that their passport forms are filled out properly. I know that I am speaking not only for myself. I have had many conversations with other members of Parliament from all political parties that have found that almost all of the time of one of their constituent assistants in their ridings is taken up trying to assist constituents with passports, with properly filling out the applications, getting it sent away and assisting them in getting a passport in a timely manner.

I wonder whether the government realizes that in not making a strong case to the Americans against this. Unless they are prepared to put a lot of resources into it, suddenly every Canadian, to say nothing about every American, who crosses the border is going to need a passport. What type of problems will that create, just administratively, not only for members of Parliament obviously but for the passport office itself?

• (2115)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his question. It is a very serious question about which I want to say two things.

First, my colleague is quite right. Being on Montreal island, we have some time problems, but the constituency offices do not need to give it a lot of energy. However, I know many colleagues who have to hire someone to deal only with passports. So there is a very real resource problem. I hope that my colleague understands what I am saying.

That being said, it will be impossible for an individual or a family of four with a modest income to have to get a passport to go on small trips to one country or the other. A passport will cost each American \$97. This means that crossing the border will no longer be a pastime for many families of labourers, workers and of ordinary people who used to go to the States, as we used to say, and for Americans to come to Quebec and to Canada. This will no longer be possible because of the cost. For this reason as well, we must reject this initiative.

Of course, as I said, my colleague is right to talk about resources. However, in any case, people who do not have money to pay for these resources did not ask for them. We cannot prevent people, for money reasons, to cross this border between two countries that have been neighbours and friends for centuries, despite their squabbles.

[*English*]

Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have this opportunity to communicate my concerns and those of my constituents about the proposed western hemisphere travel initiative, also known as WHTI, during this take note debate.

Government Orders

I represent the federal riding of Welland in the Niagara Peninsula in the province of Ontario. Until last year's redistribution of federal electoral boundaries, I represented the municipality of Fort Erie for 10 years. Fort Erie is home to the Buffalo and Fort Erie Bridge Authority, or the Peace Bridge, as it is commonly known, linking Fort Erie, Ontario with Buffalo, New York. The Peace Bridge is one of the busiest Canada-U.S. land border crossings in Canada for both leisure and commercial traffic.

This morning the member for Niagara Falls and I met in Buffalo, New York with Senator Chuck Schumer, Congresswoman Louise Slaughter, Congressman Brian Higgins as well as Senator Hillary Clinton on a conference call. We also met with members of the business, industry and tourism communities of western New York state and the Niagara Peninsula, all of whom are opposed to the implementation of passport requirements. Most especially, I point out, these are American politicians. We all delivered our message. Also attending was the acting secretary of homeland security, Elaine Dezenski. Passport requirements for entry on the Canada-U.S. border will simply be a disaster for both our countries.

First, however, I would like to reiterate Canada's commitment to the principle of the smart border declaration. Public security and economic security are mutually reinforcing. I also wish to emphasize the importance of the Canada-U.S. economic relationship and to limit the potential negative impact of the WHTI initiative by promoting the flexible application of alternate document requirements.

While I respect the right of the government of the United States to ensure border security, including improved documentation requirements, I believe such initiatives should be approached carefully so as not to impede the flow of legitimate trade and traffic across the land borders between Canada and the United States. There must be reasonable alternatives to meet the United States security requirements. It is time to get it right and getting it right does not mean passports.

The high volumes of cross-border traffic, coupled with the time consuming and labour intensive security of presenting passports, for example, would literally choke our border. The passport requirement is totally impractical and potentially injurious.

In 2004 over 34 million Americans visited Canada. At the same time, 36 million Canadians visited the United States. This is a significant number, representing tens of billions of dollars to the respective economies of both countries. Many of these visitors who make one day trips come from communities close to the United States border, like mine in Niagara. It is my understanding that the majority of such visitors, both Canadian and American, do not hold passports.

The American administration must be educated on the realities that the northern border with Canada does not present the same problem faced on the southern border. Canada and Canadians are not the problem.

Our American friends and ourselves have a unique relationship. It is a relationship unlike anywhere in the world. Our American neighbours and ourselves mutually cross the border to visit family and friends, shop, go to church and go to work. We do not consider it

a border to a foreign country. We, and our American neighbours, are in fact one community.

Needless to say, the suggestion that passports may be required is of concern to many Niagara area residents who shop, work or visit regularly in the United States. My office has already noted an influx in calls concerning passport requirements to travel to the United States. Uncertainty has created confusion.

Some feel they do not want the financial burden of applying for a passport, so it would simply end their trips to the United States should a passport be mandatory. This would have a devastating impact on the U.S. economy. Similarly, frequent and often spontaneous trips by U.S. residents into Canada would decline with a similar negative impact on the Canadian economy.

There also appears to be a great deal of confusion around the implementation due to the phase-in dates. Many members of the public are not aware of the details and believe that the first phase-in period will catch everyone going to the United States. I suspect declines in traffic based on this misinformation could begin sooner rather than later with negative consequences.

In recent meetings of representatives from the regional government of the Niagara Peninsula with federal officials in Ottawa it was made crystal clear that the WHTI is one of the top three concerns for the Niagara region.

The Governments of Canada and the United States have made a great deal of headway in improving the flow of traffic at our land border crossings, including new infrastructure. Should traffic significantly decrease due to a passport requirement, all this work will have been done in vain. Well over \$100 million to capital improvements to various bridge crossings will all be for naught. These unintended consequences cannot be ignored.

● (2120)

The decline in traffic volume, estimated conservatively at 30%, will also lead to difficulties in bonding or lending capacity for the various bridge authorities. These crossings are integral parts of our trading infrastructure. They cannot be allowed to fall into disrepair.

While no one questions the right of the government of the United States to implement its own exit-entry requirements, I submit that these measures are being taken for the sake of increased security and safety and are not well thought out. I respectfully argue that anyone who harbours ill intentions toward America would not likely use the land border crossings along the longest undefended border in the world. They would cross at innocuous border areas or cross the many lakes and rivers that define our boundary. It is an impossible task to make our border impervious to terrorists. Apprehension of such interlopers would be intermittent at best. Those who have already harmed America were likely in possession of valid passports and other travel documentation. It is not a panacea for security.

Government Orders

Admittedly, many more passports will be issued by our respective countries and carried casually in pockets or cars, thereby creating a far greater security issue through the potential for increased theft or loss and subsequent misuse of these documents. Again, these are unintended consequences.

I am also mindful of the costs of applying for passports and subsequent renewals to our respective citizens, especially as they apply to families. For many, the costs would be prohibitive and a deterrent to cross-border travel. The WHTI proposal would restrict the legitimate intercountry travel for our citizens and for commercial operations.

It is interesting to note that the shortest and fastest route from Detroit, Michigan to Buffalo, New York is through southwestern Ontario and Niagara. It would increase the delivery costs of the big three automakers if they had to travel entirely within the United States. The fastest and shortest route from my residence in the Niagara region to Ottawa is through New York State, from Buffalo to Syracuse to the Thousand Islands.

I recently visited Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Canada where the only way to travel by land, as we heard earlier tonight, is to travel through the neighbouring state of Maine. Those residents would have to be in possession of a passport to get through a few kilometres to Canada and their family and friends.

I know that many Canadian and American legislators have serious concerns about this issue and its implementation. Therefore, I respectfully submit that the 2006 and 2007 implementation dates should be reconsidered, as all three implicated or affected countries take the time to carefully examine this proposal and do a thorough economic impact study. At some point we must balance security needs against day to day life across our borders. Alternatives other than passports perhaps should be explored as quickly as possible.

We cannot criticize the proposal without suggesting constructive alternatives. Yes, the best solution for me and for my constituents is not to implement the western hemisphere travel initiative. A passport requirement for cross-border travel is simply too burdensome. Yes, we have the NEXUS smart card programs, which certainly are of benefit to those who live close to the borders and which are now utilized with great success, but there are many who do not live close to the borders. What about the people who live perhaps in Cincinnati, Ohio or Lexington, Kentucky or Boston, Massachusetts? They are not likely to have a NEXUS card and if they have to get a passport, they are not going to come.

With all the technology we have today, why can we not use perhaps a motor vehicle licence permit, a driver's licence in other words? It could have the necessary information inputted into the card, such as proof of citizenship or perhaps criminality records or otherwise. For those who do not have a driver's licence, they could obtain a border crossing card or a North American travel card, a card that is inexpensive and easy to obtain. They could get the applications at a postal outlet and there could be a quick turnaround time. Keep it simple, keep it inexpensive, keep it practical.

Our respective countries must work together to find a solution. We must balance political security with economic security and social

interaction for our respective citizens. This is too important for both of our countries.

● (2125)

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Chair, I compliment my colleague on his submission, as well as my colleague from New Brunswick Southwest who is really responsible for having this matter come before the House with his emergency debate application last week, which was sadly turned down by the Speaker at that time.

With respect to the documentation that my colleague suggests should be contemplated, I think the real issue here is that it should not be necessarily limited to a single document, at least not at this time. He would know that just over 40% of Canadians and somewhere in the range of 30% to 34% of Americans are currently in possession of a passport. One of the overriding concerns is that if the western hemisphere travel initiative is to come into effect within the next year or two years, as is currently legislated, there will be severe repercussions at the border, as he has suggested, with respect to trade and security.

I am quick to point out that while I agree there is a greater danger of a threat crossing from our border or likewise from the American side coming into Canada happening at a remote border crossing, it is his government that has made significant cuts in withdrawing police from rural communities, not arming our border guards, not giving them sufficient protection and training. I would also be quick to point out that it was in fact at a major crossing in British Columbia where Ahmed Ressam was stopped on the American side of the border, not the Canadian side. This is not to be alarmist or to suggest for a moment that our border agents are not doing good work and being very diligent, but we are not supporting them to the extent that we should.

I make that observation and ask my friend whether it is in fact his real belief that the documentation should be limited to one document. I hope I was mistaken in my hearing when he said that it should be a document that is simple to obtain. That would in fact undermine the entire purpose of the document itself, if it was easy to obtain. It has to be a document that is certainly secure and one that would make the greatest use of the technology that is available.

We have some very sophisticated programs, such as Sentry, NEXUS, FAST and others the member alluded to. The trouble is they are not fully implemented and integrated with the American system at this point. We are not sharing the information to the extent that we should with our own officials, let alone with their compatriots on the other side of the border.

Government Orders

I hope that we will hear some assurance tonight from the member or from his government that Canada and the Prime Minister in particular are going to make maximum benefit of the fact that the Secretary of State of the United States, Condoleezza Rice, is in our country, as one member so famously put it, as we speak. She is in Canada today and will be tomorrow. I hope that this issue will be brought up at those high level meetings and will be done in a diplomatic and forceful way so that the Americans understand the implications for our country and for their own. I am sure they are quickly coming to realize that the ramifications may in fact be worse on the American side of the border.

I would hope as well that we will get some guarantee from someone on the government side that the Government of Canada will be making a submission to the Department of Homeland Security, as it has requested, by October 31, which is rapidly approaching. We hope that that submission will be fulsome and forceful and that it will in fact set out Canada's position as has been solicited by Mr. Chertoff.

I am asking my hon. colleague and friend to give that assurance to the Canadian people because time is of the essence. We do not want to dither away this opportunity as has so often been the case under the woeful leadership of the Prime Minister.

• (2130)

Mr. John Maloney: Mr. Chair, certainly I can assure the hon. member that the government will be making a forceful intervention on this initiative before October 31. I hope the hon. member will be making his own because I certainly will be as well.

It is a foregone conclusion that this subject will be on the agenda of the Prime Minister and Condoleezza Rice this evening or tomorrow. There is no question about it. The fact that this debate was scheduled for tonight, the natural follow through would be that this would happen.

On the matter of obtaining the travel documents, if they are necessary, and again, my first position is not to have this requirement whatsoever, I have met with American congressmen and senators from other parts of the United States but not the border states. The senators, congressmen and governors of the border states are all opposed to this, but as we go further south into the United States they are of a different ilk and they feel otherwise and are more concerned with security than the economic benefits to either of our countries.

I think reasonable alternatives should be considered. When I said that the card should be simple to obtain, we all know that the NEXUS and Smart border program take a little time. Our citizens would need these cards, if it is in fact implemented, as quickly as possible.

It does not mean that we are going to sacrifice the security requirements and the information that goes into it, but we could obtain them from a postal outlet as opposed to having to go to the border to pick up an application. We should make it easy, make it accessible for our citizens and make it inexpensive.

As we know it costs \$85 for a passport now and a NEXUS card costs roughly \$50. If one has a family one wants an application with

a fee of perhaps \$10 which would simply cover the cost of processing or even perhaps a little less to keep it going.

The member had many other questions I believe but those were the highlights that I wish to respond to.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like my friend from Welland to sit back and pretend to be Condoleezza Rice watching this debate on television and listening to the chair of the justice committee and similar wording from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness who is responsible for security in this country and she hears words like “maybe we should ask them to reconsider”. They have both used those terms this evening and I think we heard it from one other member. If I were Condoleezza Rice listening to this debate, as I am sure some people from the U.S. state department probably are, I would be thinking, “They don't really care. They're not really serious”.

We have to start speaking in terms of we are demanding that this change. The member has indicated that he is fully aware, as are any number of parliamentarians on the U.S. side both in the House of Representatives and in the Senate and in fact the President himself, that this does not make sense.

Why are we not using those kinds of terms? Why is the government not being strong and forceful on this point? We have to communicate strongly the type of impact this is going to have on us and on the economy in the United States.

I would like some comments from the member in that regard.

• (2135)

Mr. John Maloney: Mr. Chair, I do not know where the hon. member is coming from by saying that we are not objecting to this and we are not saying that it does not make sense. In fact, that is what we are saying. That is what most of us have been saying here tonight.

When they say they do not really care, I met with five American politicians this morning. They care an awful lot, as do their constituents. That is why they are opposed to it and that is why they will carry that message. That is why collectively we gave that message to the assistant secretary of homeland security, Elaine Dezenski. This message is getting through loud and clear, as I am sure the Prime Minister will be telling Condoleezza Rice tonight.

I do not know where the member is coming from. This whole debate is to focus on that. The member has made a statement and so many of our members have made a statement.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Chair, one of the points that we have made and in defence of the question asked by the member for Windsor—Tecumseh is the point which I made earlier tonight. During routine proceedings we have what we call statements by ministers. Why would the Prime Minister, for over a year now, not come into the House and make it perfectly clear where the Government of Canada stands on one of the most important issues, and I do not think this is exaggeration, that could be more catastrophic than mad cow disease and softwood lumber combined? This affects every industry and every person in the country.

Government Orders

Why in the last year would the Prime Minister of Canada not use that opportunity to state the position of Canada very clearly, logically and forcefully on the floor of the House of Commons?

Mr. John Maloney: Mr. Chair, let me indicate to the hon. member that the Government of Canada is clearly against this passport proposal. The Canadian ambassador to the United States has made this patently clear. The Prime Minister has as well. What more can we say? We are opposed to it and we do not want it implemented, but we have to deal with a sovereign country and its ability to regulate its own borders.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to make a few comments concerning something known as the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

For those just tuning into this or who are unaware of what the problem is or what that name refers to, this is an initiative that will require all travellers returning to the United States to have a passport or other accepted document that establishes the bearer's identity and nationality to enter or re-enter the United States.

This is a big change from what we have now. We have heard the comments tonight, and we get the comments, particularly those of us who live in border communities, about how devastating the impact of this will be and what a bad idea this is.

I should let the House know that a meeting took place this morning in Buffalo, New York, that was organized on the American side by Congresswoman Louise Slaughter. This was referred to by my colleague, the member for Welland.

Congresswoman Slaughter brought together several of her congressional colleagues. Senator Schumer was there. Senator Hillary Clinton was there via a conference call. The member for Welland and I were there. All the border mayors were there. There was a huge crowd because of the importance that is placed on this particular initiative and because of the impact that it can have.

Each of us were given an opportunity to say a few words. The first words that I indicated on my behalf, on behalf of those of us on the Canadian side, were that we are all in this together. This is not something that will hurt just the Canadian side of the border. That came through loud and clear from our colleagues along the American side. This is an initiative that has far-reaching consequences and that will hurt.

I should put that in the present tense. This is hurting right now. I talk to tourism operators in the Niagara area. They tell me that travel to Niagara is off. It is off at the borders because there is a misapprehension in the United States that this initiative has already been implemented. When I was in Washington a couple of months ago, I raised this with some American officials. They asked what the problem was, saying that this initiative was not coming in for two years yet. I said, "Two years? This is a problem right now".

This is a problem right now on both sides of the border. That is one of the things that came through loud and clear. It is not because any of us there are any less worried about security than anybody else, but the point that I have made, and others have made it and have agreed with it, is that Canada is not the problem. The Canada-U.S. border is not the problem.

I can appreciate that there are international and world security issues of concern to the United States and Canada. I accept that. I recognize that. When I was in Washington, I heard considerable information about problems on the southern United States border. The Americans have a problem there, but I urge them not to bring in an initiative that will hurt us along this long, undefended border. I think it is incumbent upon all Canadian parliamentarians and everyone in this country and those in the United States who realize what is happening to urge them not to do that.

At the same time, I appreciate that we have to continue to do more for security. Indeed, in the first speech that I made in returning to this Parliament, I raised the whole question of border security. I indicated that I believe the federal government has to do more to provide security along our borders. In fact, I pointed out to the government that because the federal government was not doing enough the Niagara Regional Police has to fill in and look after some of the security concerns. I said that was wrong. It is not that the NRP is complaining about it, but it is a responsibility of the federal government.

It seems to me that if we want to head off initiatives like the one we are dealing with today, that is a pretty good place to start: start putting more money into security. It is not just me saying it. It is not just members of the Conservative Party saying it.

• (2140)

One of the members of the government's own caucus is saying it. One of the members' senatorial colleagues has chaired a committee report called "Borderline Insecure", which has raised some of the issues that we have talked about in this Parliament. These are some of the legitimate security concerns at the border. I think that is one of the reasons why we have seen labour disruptions at the border. I have raised the matter a couple of times in question period and again tonight. These incidents have happened across the country, not only in Niagara.

Why do they happen? The customs officers tell me they get an alert that some dangerous criminal may or may not be heading for the Canadian border. The customs officers are completely unarmed. There are no armed police officers backing them up on a continuous basis. That is why they have had labour problems.

I have asked the question. We have had four of these work stoppages in my area. Do we have to have 40 of them before something gets done to settle some of these issues? I asked it in what I think was a very constructive way. I am asking it again because I have been informed today that the very bridge that we returned across after our meeting in Buffalo was the scene of another work stoppage.

It is not enough, in my opinion, for the parliamentary secretary to suggest to me that they have been investigated and that there are security concerns. We can debate all night about whether there are security concerns, but I know we have labour concerns. As well, I have concerns as the representative of that area that if these bridges are shut down because of labour problems this too has a huge impact on the Niagara area. It is my understanding that the traffic coming into Canada on the Peace Bridge into Fort Erie is backed up for miles.

Government Orders

I guess this will be like other resolutions of these things. It will take another 24 to 36 hours, but how much damage does that do? Also, does that give confidence to our American colleagues that we have a good handle on what is happening at the bridge?

These issues have to be addressed. I think they can be addressed by the government. I think it takes a great deal of determination and leadership to do that. I think it is something that should be a priority for this government, because when this border does not operate properly, everybody in this country gets hurt.

There was a reception with representatives of the Canadian auto parts industry. I was chatting with them. Some of them made the point that they are making decisions for the next five or ten years on whether that border is going to be operating properly. If they start making decisions by not locating business or not expanding their business in Canada, that too hurts all Canadians.

These are some of the issues. I have made the point, I think others have made the point, and I think the point must be made very forcefully by the government to the United States that we are not the problem. The point must be made that in finding the solutions to a problem, a problem that I believe does not exist along the Canadian-U.S. border—although we have the right to have security concerns and we want good security—to bring in an elephant gun to kill a flea is not what should be done. That is what is going to happen if we start requiring passports for everybody on either side of this border.

I am suggesting that it is not necessary. That came out unanimously this morning. We had this meeting with all these people. We were directing our comments to Acting Secretary Jasinski of Homeland Security. It was unanimous among the people there that the whole idea of passports for Canadians and Americans along the border is a bad idea.

As for the idea of what other alternatives are available, one or two individuals said something like NEXUS. I would have a little more confidence in some sort of an alternative if the NEXUS program were working better. There has been very little uptake of the NEXUS program. It is not anywhere near what CANPASS was. We can speculate on a number of reasons. I have had people tell me that it costs too much. It is basically \$80 Canadian per person. For a family of four paying \$300 or \$400, it is costly.

More important, we have to ask ourselves if it is available to people who live along the border. How about the individual who lives in Akron and says he might want to go to Canada, up to Niagara, Toronto or Ottawa for a week? Are people going to come here if they think there is a problem or if they need some additional security other than their driver's licences?

• (2145)

I have urged American officials to look to upgrading driver's licences. Most people crossing the borders have licences or something similar to that. That would be a solution to whatever problem they think we are facing at the border.

However, I hope that in meetings with Condoleezza Rice and through correspondence and communications between the Prime Minister and the President they get on this thing, because if it drifts along for the next couple of years it will mean that more harm will

come to trade, travel and the movement of goods and services between these two countries.

That would be a shame, because it should not happen between these two great countries, these two great friends. This matter should be addressed now before it does any more harm.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is appropriate to thank all those who have participated and are participating today in this debate. I want to acknowledge the attitude with which my colleague from Niagara Falls stepped in.

I would like to preface my question. More than three years ago, following the events of September 11, when I was immigration minister, we were already confronted with what I call standards standardization. We had to make sure not to impede the flow of tourists and other people. We had to find solutions together to ensure that no economic problems would arise because of the security issue.

It is essential that we clearly demonstrate that we are not at the mercy of our neighbours and allies and we must control our own information. More importantly, we must stay the course regarding the importance of facilitating passenger traffic. At the time, I had instigated a meaningful debate on the establishment of a national identity card. In fact, it was an application of the biometric card.

In this regard, I have noticed a certain shift in attitude in the Conservative Party. Back then, the immigration critic and member for Calgary—Nose Hill was dead set against such an idea. I note that, now, several people think that using the same biometric technology could be an important factor.

First, we need to ensure that passenger traffic flows well. Second, we must also ensure that we maintain a certain rhythm in the flow while adapting to the new global reality.

This entire debate calls into question the very use of biometrics, while maintaining our own security policy, but in a context of openness. We must strike a balance between openness and vigilance. We must give ourselves the tools that will allow people approaching the border from either the United States or Canada not to see a wall that would prevent economic development. This is the message we must get across.

My colleague talked about the CANPASS program. We have the NEXUS program. There already were tools and extremely important elements we could use and be at the forefront.

I have a brief anecdote. When I was touring the neighbouring states, namely the State of New York—we talk about Windsor or Niagara Falls, but we must also mention Lacolle and most of the other ports of entry—at the time, we were at the forefront and we were able to use this type of tool that enabled us to continue to monitor this information.

Government Orders

While having a security component that facilitates trade, the issue of control may allow us to adequately implement this alternative, among other solutions. Indeed, I do not think we should be at the mercy of our American allies and neighbours. However, we should have some options and alternatives that will allow us to meet the new standardization process that is taking place at the international level.

Let us take a look at ICAO. The best example is the use of passports. At ICAO, they even decided how a passport picture should be taken.

So, what would the hon. member like to see? Perhaps it would be a change of position for his own political party. We could re-evaluate it and adopt a strategy. Parliament could look at an information policy, a policy on standards and come up with alternatives, with a working instrument, which could be biometrics.

The best example is what is called “off-line” biometrics. “On-line” biometrics means—the question is coming—that we have access to a databank. That is not the point. The idea is to have an “off-line” instrument. For example, with a scanner, there could be a sort of green light, red light. In Hong Kong, every day, 144,000 people cross the Shenzhen border and it takes 10 seconds to process each one of them.

• (2150)

Would the hon. member for Niagara Falls be in favour of using off-line biometrics, which would reduce waiting times for truckers and facilitate the flow of travellers, while also promoting economic development? Does he think we should revive the debate on a national identification card and on the proper use of biometrics to protect our own interests?

• (2155)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Chair, this is the problem. The member does not get what the problem is. He asked why we did not study information policy, or develop new solutions, or look into adopting biometrics. Why does he not put together a course and have everyone go to the University of Ottawa or Carleton if that is what he wants to do? We have a problem right now. We have to respond to the Americans by October 31 on this very specific issue.

By clouding the issue and saying that he wants to study issues for the next 10 years is not solving the problem. We are hurting right now in Niagara and along the borders of our country. This proposal is hurting everyone and I want members of the government to get on top of this. It is not good enough to come here and ask why do we not look at other ideas, and study things.

For heaven's sake, go back to school if that is what he wants to do, but come up with solutions here. We need one solution and we need this thing scrapped. We have to make that point to the Americans.

I hope the member will encourage his colleagues to talk to Condoleezza Rice. I hope he will encourage his colleagues to tell the Prime Minister to speak up a little more loudly on this. We are looking for some leadership and initiative on this. We heard that this was talked about at one point when Vicente Fox and the Prime Minister were together with the President of the United States. That was very little for what is a very difficult and challenging problem.

I ask the Prime Minister to turn up the volume just a touch on this, if he does not mind, because this is important to all of us. I hope the member keeps that in mind. He can study solutions and come up with ideas for the rest of his life if he likes, but get on this problem right now because it needs to be addressed by the government.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Chair, the member for Niagara Falls has been to Washington on this issue. He met with Ambassador McKenna, myself and others in the ambassador's office on this very issue. From the meetings, I get the sense that the Government of Canada is missing this issue, that it has not spoken very loud about this and that it has done a very poor job of educating Canadians.

One of the reasons we wanted the debate tonight is so Canadians in our ridings will understand the issue. The government has failed to deliver that message to Canadians in terms of understanding the importance of this issue.

Why would it take the Government of Canada a year to be heard on this? In fact, we forced this debate. The government would be content to coast to the deadline without ever having this issue on the floor of the House of Commons. Why the silence on behalf of the Government of Canada?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Chair, I salute the member for New Brunswick Southwest. I very much appreciate his leadership on Canadian-U.S. relations. His interest in this goes back quite some time and I think that is appreciated by all of us in the House of Commons.

He is quite correct. We met with Ambassador McKenna a couple of months ago, and made many of the points we have made this evening. The message we left with him and we leave with the government is to the extent that they if they can push these issues, it will be appreciated.

We heard tonight from the parliamentary secretary that a comment is underway, that nine departments are looking at that. I suppose that should inspire all of us that the government has a handle on this. I certainly hope it does. The comment was made that now is the time to examine this issue. The government will get no disagreement with us on that. This is definitely the time to have a look at this issue. I agree with the member. I wish more had been done on this earlier. However, we have a deadline to meet and we have to pull together for the benefit of our country.

Hon. Walt Lastewka (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to join with my colleagues in speaking on an issue that could have a very serious and negative impact, not only in my riding but on the whole Niagara region, the province of Ontario and indeed, the entire country.

At first I was going to congratulate my colleague from New Brunswick Southwest and chair of the Canada-U.S. parliamentary committee leading in this debate tonight. Unfortunately, it has become more partisan than a good debate.

Government Orders

It is very important that all members of the House make our statements very clear, that we recognize a real threat to the economic state of our particular regions and to our country.

The proposed western hemisphere travel initiative is naturally a concern to Canadian and American citizens and the respective representatives who live near the Canada-U.S. border. We live on the border, we do business on the border and we have friends on either side of the border. Our communities are straddling the border.

In many cases local issues and concerns do not stop and start at an imaginary line called the international border. These issues and concerns are shared. In many cases common solutions are found. However, I feel this issue goes beyond being just a local concern and that every member of Parliament, whether they are close to the border or not, should be concerned about this proposal. The consequences could be damaging and could have a long, lasting consequence.

I recognize that this initiative did not originate from the Government of Canada. This is an initiative of the United States government. One may ask, what do we think we can do about it? Is it not a waste of time and effort to Canadian parliamentarians to debate the pros and cons of an American law? It probably would be if the implications for Canada and for all Canadians were not so serious.

The western hemisphere trade initiative could have and, in my opinion, would have a damaging economic impact on Canada as a whole.

The Government of Canada has raised objections with this in mind. The Canadian ambassador to the United States has raised objections. I believe that parliamentarians in Canada have an obligation to object and to work toward an alternate solution.

Our criticism of the western hemisphere trade initiative must be based on fact. I can understand the demand for further security within the United States, particularly in this post-9/11 world. The Americans want a secure country. I want the same for my country. I believe initiatives such as this do not further the cause of internal security. It could in fact have the opposite effect and create a sense of false security on both sides of the border.

Unfortunately, the motives of a passport holder cannot be obtained by either U.S. or Canadian authorities. Past experience shows us that those who have committed acts of terrorism have been in our respective countries while holding valid passports and valid visas. Therefore, is it possible to determine an individual's motive if they have a passport or if they possess all other types of personal and national identification? I think not.

On another point, I can see no other results from this initiative than disruption and damage to the large trading relationship on earth. Over \$1 billion a day are traded over the Canada-U.S. border. The livelihood of tens of millions of people on both sides of the border depend on the free flow of goods and services across the border.

There is more than a possibility of this economic relationship being disrupted. If this initiative goes through, we can count on disruption at the very least, and probably worse.

The situation, even for the casual visitor, becomes strained. Eighty per cent of American citizens do not have a passport and 60% of

Canadian citizens do not have passports. If the western hemisphere trade initiative becomes law, I would imagine that the casual, cross-border visit would almost become a thing of the past. What would this cost us?

Ambassador McKenna has been quoted as saying that we could expect a \$2 billion hit to our tourism industry. As a member of Parliament for the Niagara region, I see every day just what the tourism industry means to the region.

Nationally the tourism industry tops \$58 billion and Niagara is a major contributor and a major beneficiary of that industry.

● (2200)

More than 16 million people from around the world, many from the United States, visit the Niagara region each year. According to the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce, and I congratulate it for its work in this regard, the number of tourists has fallen recently due to the very mention of the passport requirement and many people thought the proposal was in fact law already. We can see the effect of this initiative before the requirement even comes into place.

In economic terms the effect of the western hemisphere travel initiative could be devastating. Tourism would be affected, cross-border commerce would be disrupted and cultural links that have developed over hundreds of years could be broken.

I need not remind members of Parliament that the United States is our largest trading partner by far. We all know that, but it is our job to remind our fellow legislators across the border in the United States that their largest trading partner, by far, is Canada. This is a fact that is all too often overlooked.

Former U.S. ambassador to Canada Paul Cellucci agrees that the recent congressional legislation could be disastrous. He said:

The problem is that so relatively few Americans have passports, so it's really on the U.S. side. Enforcing that could be a real problem, for tourism, trade, you name it. The White House gets it, the president has already voiced misgivings. On the other hand, there has to be some mechanism to track people's movements. I think technology will be our friend here again, that we'll figure out another way. My prediction is that (legislation) will be delayed.

I hope he is correct.

My conclusion is that the western hemisphere travel initiative would simply create a mess and further strain our cultural, social and economic links. This is something that none of us on either side of the border can afford. I urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to continue pressing the United States government in the strongest possible terms on the consequences of this action. Security is and should remain a top priority for all North Americans, but I am afraid this initiative would do little if anything to create a more secure continent.

Government Orders

If a passport guaranteed security for our American friends and for those of us at home, I would be the first one for it, but the fact is that there is no guarantee. The only result from the western hemisphere travel initiative would be the chaos and disruption at our borders, leading to chaos and disruption in the very fabric of the economy and society in both Canada and the United States.

• (2205)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my colleague a question, the former chair of the industry committee, on which I sat with him for a number of years. One of the reasons we are even having this debate is because the member for New Brunswick Southwest brought forward in a motion, which is very appropriate with Ms. Rice in town. It is an opportunity for the government to clear the record.

The member mentioned that the President has talked about this. We know Governor Pataki, a Republican, has talked about this as has Senator Clinton. Where has the Prime Minister been in terms of a specific comment to the public to set direction and to give confidence to the tourism industry that will be impacted by this?

The member would know that the industry committee has responsibility for the tourism file. When I asked the tourism commission back on April 11 about this being one of the biggest challenges, Ms. Michele McKenzie responded:

The research we're pursuing right now, just on the passport issue, is going to cost us in the vicinity of \$50,000 as a specific piece of research.

We are not budgeting for the passport issue per se, we're a marketing organization and we will use that information to help us market more effectively, given the concerns we have around this issue.

Thankfully, that later on turned into a \$200,000 study, which has been completed. We know economic repercussions from this would be a loss of around \$2 billion over three years in Canada and a loss of around \$800 million loss in the United States in the same timeframe.

Where has the Prime Minister been on this? Where is that leadership, given the fact that Mr. Bush has intervened on this? Why has our Prime Minister not made a public statement about this? The economic ramifications are there as are they socially. Why is the Prime Minister not leading the charge at this point in time? Will we see him make a statement today with Ms. Rice? Has he expressed that to any members of the government? Is it only because we have had to shame him into this situation? Will he make a comment tomorrow and will it be stronger than what has been presented tonight by the parliamentary secretary, or should we just ask for them not to do it at all? Will it be specific in terms of cancellation? We have not had that commitment, and I want to know where the Prime Minister is on this at this point in time.

• (2210)

Hon. Walt Lastewka: Mr. Speaker, I understand what the member is trying to get at but he is trying to put a lot of rhetoric around it.

It has been made very clear. This is an American proposal. The Americans want to put this law forward. A lot of American congressmen and senators are against it and the President is against it.

The member should know better. He should be contacting each and every one of the congressmen across the border in Michigan and making sure they are speaking against it.

Mr. Brian Masse: We have done that.

Hon. Walt Lastewka: Is the member finished?

Mr. Brian Masse: Don't make accusations.

Hon. Walt Lastewka: The member needs to talk with his members. That is the key. I agree with the member for Niagara Falls who said that Canada was not the problem. This is bad legislation.

We should be getting out of the rhetoric business. All four parties in the House need to tell the American legislators that they do not agree with their proposal for this passport requirement. It is causing damage today because it has been misunderstood. No one knows when it will start in the U.S. People today think it is the law. The member should be talking about that. He should be speaking against the U.S. legislators who are speaking for this legislation. I have spoken about this issue many times. I met with congressmen and senators over the summer.

I agree with the member for Niagara Falls and the member for Welland who talked about the meeting held this morning. It is very important that we continue to work with the members. This was a topic at the Canada-U.S. committee held this fall. This is how things get done in the U.S. They work at every level to make things happen and the member knows that.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, surely the hon. member knows that how to get things done is to actually take action. What has been missing on this file is the Prime Minister himself, as he is missing tonight, missing in action, not taking action. It is all about photo ops as opposed to follow ups.

I visited the Windsor crossing this summer with my colleague from Essex. One of the most apparent things there is the issue of the Ambassador Bridge. People can drive onto the bridge from either side without being stopped until they are encountered on the other side. Reverse clearance would simply address this issue but yet again on such a critical issue, where \$1 billion in trade a day takes place, the government is doing nothing.

My colleague talks about rhetoric. The air has been thick with rhetoric tonight from the government side and yet it was not until my colleague from New Brunswick Southwest, as was pointed out, the chair of the Canada-U.S. Parliamentary Association, took the initiative to bring this matter before Parliament. It was not the government that initiated this important debate.

Some of the other important groups, like Canadian-American Border Trade Alliance, have been talking about this issue. Members of the opposition have been talking about this issue, certainly those affected on both sides of the border. Businesses, individuals, Canadians and Americans both are concerned and yet where is the big, gaping, vacuous hole in the debate? It is the Prime Minister, as he is on so many important issues, until a poll might be done to tell him what to do.

Government Orders

This is not the time to dilly-dally any further or to dither away on such an important matter that is going to cause catastrophic results should this legislation proceed. As my colleague has pointed out, the BSE crisis and the softwood crisis do not even compare to the impact economically that this will have, as well as the security concerns.

I ask my colleague again, as my friend from Windsor did, why has the Prime Minister waited and dithered on such an important issue knowing full well the catastrophic impact it will have on the Canadian economy? Even tonight we have nobody from the government side prepared to come forward to state unequivocally that this will be addressed with Condoleezza Rice. He is right to say that members of the Congress and members of the Senate in the United States are pulling back on this. The President himself unequivocally stated reservations about this legislation.

Where is the Prime Minister? Where is a single, solitary, on the record public statement suggesting, as my colleague from Niagara said, that we are opposed to this and that we, in no uncertain terms, recognize that this will have a terrible impact on our economy? What we have heard time and time again is the provocative, objectionable language from the government directed toward the United States, including from the ambassador recently, I am quick to add.

The Canadian ambassador suggested—wait for it—that the American government is dysfunctional. I know the American system of government is not perfect but imagine those words coming from a government in a country where we have an unelected Senate, where we do not review judicial appointments and where we have all kinds of difficulties in the government with respect to corruption. It is like the Prime Minister going to the United Nations and lecturing on corruption and keeping one's word. Can anyone imagine? Talk about taking hypocrisy to catastrophic new heights.

The government has no lessons to give the Americans when it comes to dysfunctional government. Forceful, straightforward, diplomatic language is what is needed on this file, not provocative, insulting language about the President, not the type of language that we have heard coming from members of the government benches toward the American people. That kind of objectionable language does not get us anywhere. It does not move this file or any other file forward. What it does is suggest that somehow we are preaching from the pulpit. What it truly suggests and what we know is coming in the coming days in this election is, of course, domestic politics, which is bashing the Americans for the purposes of gaining electoral support.

I ask the hon. member opposite to tell us when the Prime Minister will show up on this file.

• (2215)

Hon. Walt Lastewka: Mr. Speaker, I heard earlier from the parliamentary secretary that this discussion would be held with Ms. Condoleezza Rice and the Prime Minister. I know the member wanted to harp on it and did not want to listen to the parliamentary secretary but while he was doing all his tactics I noticed that he conveniently missed the fact that this government has had no deficit for eight years, that it has been paying down the debt and that his Conservative government left this country in 1993 with a \$44 billion deficit, the highest debt ever in this country.

I noticed that he conveniently missed that. He needs to be reminded that his government was a total disgrace and left this country almost bankrupt in 1993 which is why the Conservatives got thrown out of government.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps at this point we can insert a little more civility into the exchange in the House.

I rise this evening to speak to the western hemisphere travel initiative which, as I heard one of my colleagues say, is really a misnomer because this is not at all about travel initiatives. It is just the opposite. It is about inhibiting the free flow of both passengers and cargo across the Canada and U.S. borders.

The point I want to make very succinctly is that this will be a catastrophe.

My colleague from Windsor West has already pointed out that a study has been undertaken and produced as to the impact. I have to say that study almost certainly does not fully encompass the damage it will do to the Canadian economy and equally to the American economy.

We can speak to this from the Windsor area with a great deal of expertise because of our experience ever since 9/11 struck us.

Since 9/11 we have had the chambers of commerce on both sides of the border say that the economies of the three states immediately bordering us and the province of Ontario have lost billions of dollars. The last figures I saw for the end of 2004 were approximately \$12 billion to the economy of Ontario and roughly \$7.5 billion U.S. to \$8 billion U.S. to the economy in the U.S. What we are expecting to see as a result of this passport initiative on the part of the U.S. government is an increase in those losses in the billions of dollars.

To make this simple and clear, I always point to the gaming industry in Windsor and in Niagara Falls. They are probably both going to take a hit of at least a couple of hundred million dollars just in that one industry. That does not include the rest of the hospitality industry that feeds off the gaming industry in those two cities. This will be multiplied right across this country and on both sides of the border.

A number of times this evening I heard members from the government side say that maybe we should be investigating alternatives. I want to say very clearly to them, from all the experience I have had as a representative on the public security subcommittee of the justice committee, that there is no alternative. We have heard about drivers' licences. It is not an alternative. It does not work because we do not have the technology to make it work.

It was interesting to hear the former minister of immigration talk about his high-falutin idea of an ID card. It does not work. The technology is not there. We are nowhere close enough to a foolproof system in biometrics to make an ID card work.

Suggestions have been made about using our SIN number and SIN card, similar to the one they have on the U.S. side but, again, we do not have the technology to make that work.

Government Orders

There is no alternative. The only approach we can take as a government is to convince the U.S. that there is no alternative, that this recommendation, which has now turned into legislation, has to be reversed. At the very least, we need legislation moving through both the Congress, that is the House of Representatives, and the Senate in the U.S. to back this up to see if somewhere further down the road we might be able to develop technology that would make this possible. However it is clearly premature at this time because we cannot do it.

We, the border caucus on the Canadian side, have been meeting quite regularly, both in person, by telephone and through written communication, with the northern border caucus from the U.S. side. These are members of Congress from the House of Representatives. We have had a great deal of exchange. The points that I have just made have all been canvassed and been accepted by both sides, that we cannot do it and that these phases that are coming have to be delayed at the very minimum.

• (2220)

The concern that we have primarily is that we all know as parliamentarians, as legislators, how difficult it is to get a piece of legislation through our respective parliaments and on the U.S. side, the house of representatives and the senate, and on to the President for signature. That is what is required in this case because this law has already been passed. It is quite clear that for a number of representatives on the U.S. side, they just missed the boat.

Senator Clinton has been very clear in her admissions that it came as a shock to her that this provision had been in the legislation that she had in fact approved as it went through the senate. We have heard the same thing from a number of other members of the house of representatives and the senate. However, in order to correct that, there is only one way to do it.

This is not something where politicians can stand up and say they are going to postpone it. There has to be a piece of legislation and I am not hearing from the government any sense of the crisis that we are faced with and the urgency of getting the federal government on the U.S. side to accept that it is going to have to pass a piece of legislation doing one of two things. It must either repeal the provisions of the three phase-in periods for the demand for passports if one wants to go back into the United States, whether one is an American or a Canadian, or from some other country. Or, if it is not prepared to go that far, then it must pass a piece of legislation that would authorize either the President or some other person of the administration to delay the implementation of this until we in fact can do it effectively, from a technological standpoint and from a manageable cost efficient standpoint as well.

In that regard, the provisions that we have at the present time for providing passports are overtaxed, both on the Canadian side and on the U.S. side. Americans have many fewer passports on a per capita basis than we do, but neither one of the countries, neither Canada nor the United States, could in fact meet the demand that will be forthcoming for these passports.

We cannot do it in Canada in that short period of time nor can the United States. It is just not feasible for this to be implemented from a practical standpoint. We do not have the resources on either side of

the border to make that many passports available to our citizenry in that period of time. It is not possible to do that.

I want to finish with the point that has been made repeatedly this evening but has to be emphasized. We know that a good number of the legislators on the U.S. side realize now that this bill when it went through should not have gone through. In fact, it was a mistake. President Bush himself has made comments using terminology around the sanity of the people who passed this and the intelligence levels of the people who passed this law. He made those remarks off the cuff, but they were an accurate reflection of what happened. This does not meet the test of reality and it has to be changed. There is strong support for that.

I have heard a number of comments from columnists in our newspapers that the debate this evening was going to be anti-American. It shows the ignorance of those commentators because we know that a majority of the senate and the house of representatives realize now that this piece of legislation was a mistake. It is not anti-American; it is not necessarily even pro-Canadian. It is simply facing the reality that this is not a feasible process and that the U.S. Congress, senate and house of representatives, and ultimately the President, have to move a piece of legislation to repeal this law.

Let me make one final point going back to the impact that this is going to have if we do not change it. I went through and analyzed just the economy in my home riding. We have a sizeable gaming industry now. It is the fourth largest employer in the city of Windsor. We have a reasonably sizeable convention industry.

• (2225)

We have a large number of cultural exchanges between ourselves and the United States. We have sports teams, mostly youth teams that move back and forth on a regular basis. We have a great number of people who go over to the United States and vice versa. People come to Canada for recreational purposes. We have a large number of people who work on the U.S. side but live on the Canadian side. Finally, we have a good number of students who move back and forth on both sides of the border. Every single one of those categories are going to be negatively impacted by this law. Hardly any part of the economy is not going to be touched.

Therefore, there is a crisis. It is one that the government has not been meeting face on. It is time for it to do that.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh. He speaks with a calmness and a reasonable approach in terms of his argument that allows us to understand not only his perspective but more plentifully the size and magnitude of this very serious problem.

It is not the first time, certainly in contemporary times, where a decision taken in the United States will have far-reaching impacts well beyond its border. I am thinking of course of matters that will also affect us in the not too distant future: the issue of solid waste as well as the issue of daylight savings time.

Government Orders

It seems to me that the member is certainly on to something as far as how we handle this issue. He has pointed out that an initiative to deal with Americans returning to their own country with passports, from almost a purely domestic perspective, seems to be at variance and odds with what the American government and two other nations signed not more than seven months ago with the security and prosperity partnership of North America.

I spoke very briefly with the hon. member beforehand. If I am to read the agreement that was concluded between Canada, Mexico and the United States when they gathered in Waco, Texas in March of this year, it talks among other things about the establishment of a common approach to security to protect North America from external threats. The agreement was concluded to respond to threats within North America; further streamline the secure and efficient movement of legitimate low risk traffic across borders; implement a common border security via protection strategies; and implement border facilitation strategy to build a capacity to improve the legitimate flow of people and cargo.

It sounds to me as if this particular agreement which took place well after the legislation had passed is not just a sleeper issue but it shows perhaps a dichotomy in the United States of what the executive branch is saying and doing, and what legislators are doing at the same time.

It may also help express the very short period of time in which we have been provided comment. As the hon. member knows, we have only had since September 1. Armed with this as a treaty, I would quickly conclude that it is the will of the American people to work cooperatively, on all matters dealing with their security and their border, with the two nations with which they have so much in common, particularly Canada.

We are seeing in rapid succession a number of initiatives which seem to be domestic in nature. I know his colleague, the member for Windsor West, took exception to my comments about the domestic purpose or intent. However, it seems very clear that, given the size and the stature of the American economy and its influence which we are dealing with in other areas, as has been a question of generations of this Parliament in the past, we are now dealing with the necessity of understanding legislation as it is passed and its potential implications and indeed its potential contradictions. How would the hon. member rectify and get around this law, not just for the sake of government but for the sake of finding unanimity?

We can tell the Americans that this is the wrong thing to do. However, with so many other things, it is being done for what they perceive to be their own interest and it is a pretty hard argument to make.

• (2230)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I always have the sense that when the parliamentary secretary asks those questions, he is asking me to do the job of the government. We are used to carrying a heavy burden for the government since it seems to have difficulty in getting things done, but I will respond.

The Waco agreement is an agreement in fairly general terms. It does make reference to all three governments, Canada, Mexico and the United States, and how they should deal with problems of documentation and facilitating border crossing by their respective

citizens. Unfortunately, that agreement does not have the status of a treaty. It would be up against very specific legislation in the United States.

It is another bit in our arsenal to convince the U.S. senate and house of representatives that they should repeal or at the very least, delay the legislation, but it is nothing more than that. The agreement is not binding on the United States. It is not binding on us or on Mexico to the degree that we would have to follow through with legislation. At best, it has moral suasion on the United States. I suppose we can use it for that purpose.

My sense is that the practical arguments that I raised in my opening address are much stronger, both in terms of the negative impact on the economy and just the practicality that we cannot produce the passports. We cannot produce an alternative document because the technology is not there, nor do we have the efficiencies within our system to produce that many passports in the period of time we would have to.

The final point I would make in terms of relying on the agreement is that we have seen so many times, and this was one of the points the parliamentary secretary was making, especially with this administration that when it appears to have made commitments at the international level and when those commitments clash with what it sees as its self-interest, it unilaterally rejects and repudiates agreements. We cannot rely very heavily on this administration following through. The practical arguments make much more sense in convincing it.

• (2235)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have had an incredible loss of tourism in the Essex-Windsor region since 9/11. In fact, we have never recovered from it. I think of times when people used to pull up their boats from Jefferson Beach Marina across the way, at Duffy's in Amherstburg, or they used to pull into Belle River and enjoy the town life there. They have not come back and our restaurants are closing or they are near to closing down. Many of them had 80% U.S. clientele. Our hotel vacancy rates are hovering at 50% or lower.

We have just not been able to recover since 9/11 and now we have this western hemisphere travel initiative. It is a nice sort of euphemism, but it threatens to put the nail in the coffin on tourism in our region. The border communities in Essex-Windsor also face something interesting that the member for Windsor—Tecumseh talked about, the economic devastation that would come with this law.

We have integrated families in the region. We face the absurd reality that families would now have to get passports just to visit relatives or vice versa or maybe to see a Tigers ball game across the river because that is where the professional sports are. It is going to present enormous challenges.

Maybe up here in Ottawa, where the border reality is with the province of Quebec, it is not understood what is going on in border communities. That is shameful. The Prime Minister has been absent on this issue. I will give credit to members of the border caucus, the members for Windsor—Tecumseh and Windsor West, who have been out in front on this. It has not been the government.

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Does the member believe the Prime Minister will finally end his silence and stand up for Canadians and our families in border regions? What is it going to take for the Prime Minister to end his silence and defend Canadians against this initiative?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting, but I do not think I have an answer for what it is going to take. I would have thought that the three opposition parties, the Bloc, the Conservatives and ourselves, have done everything we could to draw this to the attention of the Prime Minister, who quite frankly should know better. The Prime Minister is from the Windsor area. I represent the riding that his father used to represent. The Prime Minister's former home is only four blocks from the Detroit River. Any parliamentarian, other than perhaps the three of us from the Windsor area, should understand intimately the impact this initiative has.

Why the Prime Minister has not been out front on this issue is a very negative comment about him. Quite frankly, I do not have a lot of hope. In this case I think it is going to be the opposition parties that eventually are going to carry the day and convince the U.S. government that it has to make the changes to this legislation.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak in this debate tonight because it is important for the people in my area. We share a border with the United States.

For the people who have tuned in late tonight, or early tonight if they are from my riding of Yukon, I would like to let them know what we are discussing. The United States is proposing to put in laws requiring that anyone going to the United States will need a passport or some secure document like that. This would also include American citizens returning to the U.S.

Of course every country determines its own security requirements, but this would have a devastating impact on the tourism industry in both Canada and the United States. In particular, it will have a devastating impact on the tourism industry in my part of Canada, which is perhaps one of only two provinces and territories where tourism is the biggest private sector employer.

As members know, my very large riding shares a very large border with the U.S. My riding is made up of 482,443 square kilometres. We are bordered on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the east by the Northwest Territories, on the south by British Columbia, and on the west by our neighbours in the state of Alaska.

I find it interesting to be discussing legislation that originates in the United States and is intended to help address its security concerns but which fails to recognize the scope of the economic impact it will have on Americans as well as us.

I want to take a closer look at the facts and the impact the legislation will have on the Yukon territory and on our just over 30,000 residents. We have four border crossings in my riding at which we welcome our American friends and other travellers into Yukon. Often there is just a daily interaction between Alaskans and Yukoners going back and forth across the border in a very informal manner and helping each other's economies. Our four border crossings are Beaver Creek, Fraser, Little Gold and Pleasant Camp, all very welcoming ports of entry.

So much so that the most recent figures I have on entries into the Yukon show a 2.4% increase in travellers, up from the same period last year. Figures indicate that by the middle of this summer, 82,159 travellers had entered the Yukon, an increase of nearly 2,000 travellers from the same time last year. Over the course of a full year the Yukon welcomes over 316,000 visitors. As indicated earlier, with the size of my riding and its population, that is a very respectable number of tourists who visit us and they are very important for our economy.

Whether they come by charter boat or bus operations or are business or day trippers from nearby Alaskan communities, these travellers represent tourism, a \$165 million a year business in Yukon. In fact, 890 businesses service or are involved in the tourism trade.

There are some given concerns on this proposed legislation. For example, from our perspective, the cost of a passport for either Yukon or Alaska residents may be prohibitive, which means they would not be travelling to either the state or the territory, which in turn would result in a decrease in border traffic. This is particularly cogent in regard to those who have lower incomes and just want a short holiday across the border to a place that they can just drive to for the day. It will also have an impact on people with large families when the cost adds up for the number of passports required, in either country.

Too, residents of both sides may have concerns about the process and the timing in obtaining passports when they decide to just go across the border for the day. I am happy in this respect, though. Our office was dealing with huge numbers, with over 7,000 passports. After encouragement from us, the Canadian government has opened a passport office in Whitehorse, Yukon. I want to highly commend foreign affairs and the government for doing this. It has been very helpful. We have heard great reports from citizens of Yukon about how efficient the office is and how well it is doing in providing passports.

● (2240)

I do not believe that this U.S. legislation clearly addresses the requirements that might also be placed on the first nation communities. There are large first nation communities in Alaska and Yukon. They have unique status and it must be respected. It is not clear how these new rules might respect that.

As I mentioned, our tourism industry is very closely tied in with that of our counterparts in Alaska. I remember from the years when I was directing the Tourism Canada office in Yukon how important it was, how many relationships and conventions there were, and how we worked together to bring tourists from around the world to Yukon and Alaska.

Government Orders

The ties are so close that in a number of cases we actually have joint marketing strategies. We have initiatives where we work together. It is a win-win situation. If we have the implementation of this new initiative, these joint marketing initiatives could become ineffective and they may not exist at all. Of course we would both lose economically from not having tourists from other parts of the world come to our areas.

Of course these types of effects are not related only to Yukon. I am spending most of my time talking about the effects on Yukon, but of course they would be pervasive right across Canada and the United States. This will have harmful effects on the tourism industry and tourism businesses in both the United States and Canada.

I want to compliment the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, the Tourism Industry Association of Canada and the Canadian Tourism Commission for the work they have done in developing the statistics and studying this issue. This has been helping us continue to make the arguments about the problems this initiative would cause for two countries that have friendly interaction, very successful business tourism interaction and the world's friendliest border.

The study proposes that over the period from 2005 to 2008 Canada would lose 7.7 million inbound trips. That is 7.7 incursions into Canada from the United States of people who would be coming here to enjoy Canada, invest in our tourism businesses and help build the economy in Canada.

That would add up to about \$1.7 billion in international tourism receipts. By anybody's standards, a loss of \$1.7 billion if this initiative is put in place, give or take a little depending on the estimates, would have a major crippling effect on our tourism industry.

We would not lose all of that, but we would lose most of it. A small amount would be made up by domestic substitutions. Canadians who did not have a passport to get into the United States would stay in Canada for their trips, but that would be a very small number. It is still estimated that there would be a loss to the Canadian tourism industry—including, as I said, the biggest private sector employer in my jurisdiction—of a total for Canada of \$1.6 billion.

The important thing for people in the United States to remember is that the same negative effect on the economy of the United States would occur. It would not be identical, but very similar. The Americans would lose their projected 3.5 million trips from Canadians going into the United States to invest money, especially into the border states, which recognize this. That would be an estimated loss of \$85 million in tourism receipts. The businesses in the United States would lose.

I think this is partly because of the great relationship we have between our two countries. It is the longest undefended border. We just go back and forth as if we are making trips between friends. That is why only about 34% of U.S. citizens over 18 have passports and only 41% of Canadians do, less than half. We can see how vast numbers of trips could not be completed.

I want to say that this means \$165 million in business to my community, which is very, very important. We could lose up to half

of that, our local tourism industry suggests. Therefore, I urge the government to continue to keep this as a high priority.

• (2245)

I was in Washington and I believe that the ambassador has this as the second highest priority and is working hard on this issue. I would urge all the Canadian departments that are working on this to have a strong input into the public input period now and to keep on working on this. It is very important to the tourism industry in both countries.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to take part in this take note debate on the U.S. government's western hemisphere travel initiative, or WHTI.

The WHTI is a major concern for all MPs who have border ridings with towns that depend on the tourism that crosses the 49th parallel, or for the Canadian economy generally. The WHTI may include a passport-only policy that would slow and even reduce the movement of Canadians and Americans across the border.

I represent South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale which has the busiest north-south corridor in western Canada. Seven million vehicles cross this corridor every year and a passport-only policy will have a major impact. Tourist dependent businesses such as hotels, gas stations, restaurants and duty free shops are all projected to suffer significant losses should the WHTI go ahead with the passport-only provision written in the regulations.

I also serve here in Parliament as one of the four co-chairs of the parliamentary border caucus, a non-partisan caucus that draws on members from all four parties who have an interest in trade and security issues affecting the border. I know many members of the border caucus have already written to the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security to encourage him to seriously reconsider the impact of a passport-only policy. Such a policy would likely have a negative effect on tourism, on individual and family finances, and possibly even on some aspects of long term security. Before I examine these issues in further detail, I want to reflect on the importance of the Canada-U.S. relationship.

We share the world's longest undefended border and the world's largest trading partnership. More than a quarter million Canadians were born in the U.S. and a whopping 650,000 Americans were born in Canada. More than 2.5 billion telephone calls were made between Canada and the U.S. last year and more than 14 million air travellers made their way north or south. More than \$190 billion in American exports made their way to Canada last year, the top export destination for goods from 37 of the 50 United States. Almost all of that trade happened duty free because of NAFTA. In fact the U.S. exports more to Canada than to Britain, France, Germany, Japan and China combined. U.S. exports to Canada kept 5.2 million Americans employed last year.

Government Orders

I want to make it clear from the outset that I strongly support the broad goals of the WHTI and the added peace and security it will bring to the United States and North America. However, I do have serious concerns about how the regulations will be written and implemented by the Department of Homeland Security.

The legislation, as we know, includes a plan to require all Canadian citizens and U.S. citizens to have passports or comparable secure ID in order to enter or re-enter the U.S. This is an eminently sensible requirement. Our concern arises over what the Department of Homeland Security's requirements for secure ID will entail.

Let me be clear. I believe that the current system of admittance to the U.S. from Canada involving either a passport or government issued photo ID, usually a driver's licence or health card, combined with proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate or citizenship card, should continue to constitute acceptable identification. As I will explain shortly, there are good public policy reasons for doing so. Of course, legitimate concerns have been raised by various U.S. lawmakers that some state issued ID documents in particular do not contain enough security features to constitute secure ID.

We accept that some and perhaps all jurisdictions may need to increase the level of security features in their issued ID documents. However, the lack of adequate security features in some documentation should not be cause for rejecting the current system of photo ID and proof of citizenship out of hand. In other words, we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Instead, I would encourage the Department of Homeland Security to set appropriate minimum security standards for state issued ID which individual jurisdictions could then choose to meet in the best interests of their constituents. Such minimum standards for ID might include tamper resistance or better quality paper stock or the inclusion of new biometric features or technology.

• (2250)

Of course, as I think we can all quickly understand, raising the standards for the security of ID would be of benefit in more areas than simply border security.

Let us remember that both Canadian and American governments have risen to meet this sort of challenge before. We have not stopped using paper money just because some criminals chose to counterfeit it. Rather, we produced new bills with enhanced design and quality to defeat attempts at counterfeiting. I believe we can and must meet the same challenge with respect to government issued identification.

Failure to meet this challenge will be very costly. Approximately 300,000 people travel between Canada and the U.S. every day. The introduction of a rigid passport-only requirement can be expected to have an extremely detrimental effect on this cross-border travel, causing huge economic losses in tourism for both Canada and the United States.

According to a research study put out by the Canadian Tourism Commission in July of this year, tourism losses on the Canadian side alone would amount to nearly \$1 billion annually by 2008 as the total U.S. trips to Canada fall by 12.3%. The cost is not only to the economy. There are significant concerns with the cost and feasibility of obtaining passports for both Canadian and American families.

Under the WHTI, even children would be required to have an individual passport. Currently, only 41% of Canadians hold passports. The cost of obtaining a standard passport in Canada, good for five years only, is \$87 Canadian. For the average family of four, the \$348 cost of obtaining passports for travel south becomes a hefty financial burden discouraging irregular travel. If a family vacation will cost an additional \$350 before leaving home, many families may choose to vacation elsewhere.

In the same way, Americans would also suffer from these new passport requirements. Even fewer Americans hold passports, currently just 34%, and standard U.S. passports cost \$97 U.S., although they are good for 10 years.

Not only are the financial burdens of this legislation significant, but they may actually present a new and unintended security risk. The new requirement to have easy and regular access to passports, especially in many of our border communities, would likely result in many Canadians and Americans changing their behaviour and storing their passports in their glove compartments or purses rather than securely in their homes. The risk of theft of these items would become increasingly serious if such changes in behaviour took place.

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the number of international travellers to the U.S. was 40.4 million in 2003. This is a sharp decline from 2000 when a record 50.9 million international travellers visited the United States. Obviously September 11 had and continues to have a major impact on the U.S. travel and tourism sectors. We can well appreciate the U.S. demand to prevent another terrorist attack. At the same time, if barriers to entry are made too high, the U.S. travel and tourism sectors could suffer as well. Even a 1% decline in travel to the U.S. eliminates 172,000 jobs, according to the commerce department.

Some members of the border caucus joined me on the Hill recently for a meeting with representatives of the cruise ship industry. We heard how the passport-only requirement would cause severe headaches for cruise ship patrons travelling up the west coast of North America to Alaska.

According to the industry, the majority of passengers do not currently own passports. Other concerns have arisen as well. How will students taking part in cross-border sporting events or school outings be treated? Will only well off families be able to afford a passport so their children can take part? Or will schools and teams just say they can no longer participate in these activities? I think that would be a tragedy and would not serve the long term interest that both Canada and the U.S. share of developing a relationship with our neighbours.

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• (2255)

Finally, what about emergency personnel? There are many small border towns that have traditionally relied upon one another in times of trouble. Would appropriate emergency vehicles be prevented from racing to the scene of an accident just over the border simply because of the passport issue? I hate to think of what kind of unintended consequences may arise if this policy is allowed to pass without due consideration.

In conclusion, the problems created by a passport-only requirement would be significant. Among these would be increased costs for families, heightened security concerns with theft of documents and substantial economic losses in tourism, especially to border states and towns.

We do not believe such a requirement would be the best answer to meeting the security concerns of North America. Instead, let us work toward improving the security features in a range of government issued ID for the benefit of all Canadians and Americans.

• (2300)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech. I thought it was very thoughtful and a very good addition to the debate. He raised something that is important for my riding. I did not have time in my speech to raise it, so it gives me a good opportunity to raise it.

He mentioned the cruise ships that come up the coast. A lot of Canadians get to my riding in Yukon, Canada by going on those cruise ships to Alaska or by plane to Alaska and then crossing the border. Some Americans end up in the Yukon and want to get into Alaska as well.

There is a unique set of laws relating to rental cars that probably work well on the southern border. Americans cannot rent cars in Canada and drive back into the United States and Canadians cannot rent cars in the United States and drive back into Canada. This may make sense down at the main border, but at the Alaska-Yukon border, because there are no car rentals nearby, it does not work. Canadians cannot get back into the Yukon to spend money and the Americans cannot get back into Alaska to spend money. It is hurting the tourism industry on both sides.

Would the member support my efforts to try and get an exemption in those laws just for the Alaska-Canada border so that Canadians could come into Canada again and spend some of their tourism money when they happen to land in Alaska on those cruise ships or airlines? The Americans could change their laws reciprocally so that they could rent cars in Canada and tour Alaska but also spend money in Canada.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, as far as whether or not I would support exemptions for people from the Yukon travelling to and fro across the border, I do not think that is the question that we are asking here. Canadians want to know whether there are going to be exemptions for all of Canada, not just for people who travel to and from Yukon. Let us not look just at the specifics. Let us look at the enormity of this problem.

It is no small task to ask 66% of Americans to get a passport or 49% of Canadians to get a passport when they do not currently have

one. It is a task beyond the ability of either of our governments to meet in the short term before these requirements take effect.

It begs the question, where has the government been on this issue? This legislation has been around for several years. It has been passed in Congress. Our government has obviously known about it, but it has done absolutely nothing with it. The Prime Minister's silence on this issue is deafening. There are seven days left to submit comments on these regulations to the Department of Homeland Security, and the Prime Minister, or any member of his cabinet, has yet to stand in this House and tell Canadians what the plan is to prevent our economy from going down the toilet.

We are talking about \$1 billion in tourism on an annual basis. That is an enormous hit to our economy. That is an enormous hit to every one of the small towns across the border, towns like South Surrey and White Rock, which are largely dependent upon tourism activity. Gas stations, restaurants, duty free stores on both sides of the border will suffer. Yet here we have a government so preoccupied with scandal and corruption that it cannot take the time to solve some of the most basic and pressing needs of the country. It strikes me as shocking, in fact, that it has been so silent on this particular issue.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the details that gets to me in the western hemisphere travel initiative is the cost to families and fixed income seniors to obtain passports just to be able to cross the border. The member said that it would cost a typical Canadian family of four somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$350 to obtain passports and it would cost a U.S. family of four a comparable amount in U.S. dollars, not even in Canadian dollars. Rich families may be willing to cover that cost. To them it is just the cost of travel or whatever. But fixed income seniors and poor families will not make the grade on this one. Standing up against this western hemisphere travel initiative really is standing up for low income Canadians.

Conservatives have been fighting this battle for months now. Where has the Prime Minister been? What will it take to get the Prime Minister to stand up for Canadians, particularly for fixed income seniors and low income families?

• (2305)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the great question but I honestly am not sure how to answer it. What will it take? Perhaps another catastrophe. Perhaps he will to dither until the border closes and then suddenly wake up and realize that we have a problem.

Our experience with the government is such that it takes an immediate crisis to get its attention. It cannot seem to plan too far ahead. It is so preoccupied with its own internal plans, scandals, corruption and grafts to their own members or past members that it cannot seem to see far enough ahead to anticipate the problems that we are facing.

Government Orders

To answer his question, I am not sure what it will take. Certainly the families that are planning their vacations for next Christmas or the Christmas after are starting to count the cost. They are starting to put away the pennies to pay for that extra \$350 it will take for them to cross the border to go to Seattle or to Disney and for our American friends to come up to Whistler to see beautiful British Columbia.

An hon. member: The Okanagan.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: The Okanagan, as my colleague points out. They are counting the costs. They are looking ahead. They are anticipating what this will do to their travel plans.

In fact, as a member of the border caucus I hear on a regular basis about the impact this is currently having. It is not even in place yet and the tourism industry is suffering because of the anticipation that passports will be required. People do not seem to know that it is not in place yet and so they are shying away in the expectation that they have heard something about it in the media, that they have read an article or maybe that a friend told them this was coming and they now seem to think that it is in place and that they cannot cross the border without a passport.

It is having an impact as we speak. What will it take to get the government's attention? I am not sure but I sure hope we can get its attention as members of the opposition stand here late this evening to bring this to its attention.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do know that the member who just spoke has invited the American Ambassador Wilkins to Parliament Hill on, I believe, Wednesday evening to give a talk, as he is one of the co-chairmen of the all party border caucus.

I want to get a sense of what types of questions and information he is seeking from the U.S. ambassador who obviously would have to agree with us that this is a huge problem in the making. In fact, I do know that when we met with our counterparts in the United States during the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary meetings in September in St. Andrews, democrats and republicans alike agreed that this was ill-thought out legislation.

However, in reference specifically to the American ambassador, what are some of the member's thoughts in terms of how he will approach the ambassador.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for drawing to the attention of members opposite and to the public that the U.S. ambassador, David Wilkins, will be addressing the border caucus this Wednesday.

This will not be the first time he has heard about this issue. I met with him about two weeks past and raised the concerns we have. He has heard them from his own government in fact. We know that this past spring the President of the United States expressed some concern about the impact this would have.

My understanding is that the Americans are so focused on security issues that they perhaps in this instance have had a lack of foresight to contemplate the consequences of the legislation. I know that Justice Sensenbrenner, the member of Congress who brought forward the real ID bill, which was the precursor to the western hemisphere travel initiative, did so because of his concerns about

illegal aliens in the United States. He was doing that to address that particular issue and that bill got transferred into the WHTI and before we knew it we were facing a crisis.

Mr. Wilkins, I am sure, is very well aware of this and he certainly will be apprised of our concerns on Wednesday when members of the border caucus speak with him, largely about this issue and perhaps other issues such as softwood and so on. Thankfully, I understand that we have some support in the United States, that members of the Congress and the Senate are with us on this issue, so hopefully working together we can draw the attention of the American Congress to revisit this question.

● (2310)

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, in this late hour of the day, we in this House are being asked to consider the western hemisphere travel initiative, a policy under consideration by the United States government that will, if implemented, fundamentally change the manner in which we travel between the United States and Canada.

This policy would require not only Canadians but also Americans to present passports as the only acceptable form of identification when travelling or returning to the United States.

When this policy was first announced in Washington on April 5, 2005, Elaine Dezenski, an assistant secretary of state, responded to a question by stating, “—we don't control what the Canadians ask of us as we go into their country”. I mention this because I am sure we will concede that should the United States proceed with this policy, in all likelihood we in Canada will require the same level of documentation.

The answer to Ms. Dezenski's statement is that we do control to some degree how we interact with each other as two nations.

The United States is our closest trading partner. We share the security of our continent through the North American Air Defense Command. From the shores of Normandy to the hills of Kandahar, Americans and Canadians have stood together. Ours is a relationship unique in the world. We have a common border that stretches over 8,893 kilometres and a common bond that moves through the fabric of our two peoples.

While we recognize the right of each nation to make whatever rules it feels are necessary for its best interests, we also know that in being so closely connected there are always implications for the actions we take. We have ideals and a vision of ourselves that can certainly be quite divergent. We do not share a common concept of health care. We may not share all the same objectives of foreign policy or, indeed, our vision of the world but we are friends.

Each year millions of Americans come north to Canada and millions of Canadians travel to the United States. We are neighbours visiting neighbours and friends visiting friends. For generations, young Canadians and Americans have crossed our mutual borders on weekends with drivers' licences in hand. They come and go seeking entertainment and they feel comfortable in each other's countries.

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Every day people and goods travel across our large frontiers as we trade with each other's number one trading partners. These efficient and unimpeded border crossings are essential for the millions of Americans and Canadians who work in industries that rely on each other for success.

We should not be about building walls between us but rather we should be about building bridges.

When we look to other parts of the world we see nations making it easier to travel between them. In fact, we see greater efforts at partnership. One only has to look at the current status of travel within the European Union. Citizens of member states of the European Union move with little or no hindrance between each other's countries. They understand that the key to a successful partnership, whether in business, culture or travel, is smooth and efficient mobility.

We understand that the United States is a country that endured the most horrendous of terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Indeed, we know there is a need for increased vigilance. However the true objective of terror is to cause those who are its victims to change their lives and to alter their ideals.

While it is essential that we work with our friends in the United States to ensure our mutual security, it is likewise just as important that we protect and encourage the very foundations of our special relationship. The ability to move between our two countries is at the heart of the relationship, and whether it is for business or pleasure, we must be accessible to each other.

• (2315)

We live on a shared continent with forests as old as time itself and rivers that flow across our borders. We share common shorelines of the greatest freshwater lakes in the world. We share a climate. We share mutual cultural interests.

There was a time when we would both speak proudly of having the world's longest undefended border. This was part of our relationship, unique in the history of the world.

The western hemisphere travel initiative is being discussed here because our relationship is important to Americans and Canadians.

I encourage all members of the House, governments in both countries and all citizens of our two countries to take the time to recognize that while we must be ever vigilant about our security, we must also be ever vigilant not to diminish the very special relationship that it has taken generations to build.

Let reason prevail and common sense carry the day.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, this initiative could have a tremendous effect on our tourism industry of 7.7 million trips into Canada and over tens of millions of dollars in my riding.

I want to ask the member if he appreciates that this should be a non-partisan effort by everyone and we should work together in the House. It is great to hear a number of opposition members come on side tonight. As the member mentioned, it was announced on April 5 of this year but it was as early as March, before it was even

announced, that our Deputy Prime Minister came out strongly on this initiative. Our embassy has taken a number of initiatives on this. I was in Washington recently and the ambassador was giving a speech that was not even related to this topic, but he brought forward this issue to make sure that it was front and centre with many very important American leaders.

Does the member think it is very important that all the opposition parties have come on side with the many efforts the government has been making in this area?

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the member's engagement on this very important issue. I fully agree with the member's statement.

In the United States the fact is that Congress plays an incredible role in decision making. We as parliamentarians have a role to play, not just here tonight in sharing our points of view with Canadians across the country but we have an obligation as well to meet the members of Congress in the United States and discuss our mutual concerns. Many of them share similar concerns with us in Canada.

It is not just about the executive branch of the Canadian government dealing with the executive branch of the United States government. It is also about the legislators. We as legislators have that obligation and an opportunity as well to speak with our American friends to make sure that they also share our concerns.

This country has a profound understanding of the American situation and the very horrific events that happened there on September 11, 2001. There is also an incredible history of the bond between Americans and Canadians and we cannot have that interfered with in any way, shape or form by a very horrific terrorist attack which took place in the U.S.

We have to make sure that we do not impede the flow of our goods and people across the border between Canada and the U.S. Ours is a relationship that has spanned time. We must do everything possible to move forward and not backward.

The European model is becoming more and more integrated. It is not a problem to cross from one country to another without any type of documentation. In Canada we have a situation where we still require some form of documentation. To become more restrictive when we know that most Americans and many Canadians do not have passports would be a huge impediment. We as legislators have an opportunity to meet with our counterparts in the U.S. to discuss our concerns with those congressmen in order that they understand our concerns and to make sure that this does not happen.

Government Orders

• (2320)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regarding the work that Canada has done in this area, this is a good opportunity to give thanks to a group in the Canadian government that does not get enough of thanks. That is our missions in the United States. Everyone talks about the tremendous work the Canadian embassy and its staff in Washington have done, but we have missions across the United States. They have done some wonderful work on two major issues we have had with the United States recently. One is coming to a very crucial vote in Congress shortly, and that is the Arctic national wildlife drilling. Once again our missions across the United States have done great work in lobbying American congressmen.

On this issue, our missions in places like Washington State, Detroit and Buffalo have had sessions to educate stakeholders and to get people to comment to the United States government during the input period. In particular, the consulate very fond to me is the one in Anchorage right beside my riding. This morning I made the point that it sent out letters to over 100 state lawmakers, mayors, chambers of commerce, leaders and other stakeholders outlining the potential impacts for Alaska. It has encouraged them to consider joint responses.

I assume that the member would agree with me that we need all departments and arms of government working together, and compliment the Canadian consulate in Washington and our various missions right across the United States.

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising a very important point. It is by working through our stakeholders that we are able to move forward in an effective manner. Our government has been working through the consulates, through the different departments and through our stakeholders. We also have engaged members of Congress. In addition to that, we have engaged many of the people who share our concerns in the U.S.

We have been building this very important relationship. We need to ensure that we engage our stakeholders to ensure that the part of the legislation that deals with the passports, which could cause a huge economic problem to both Canada and the U.S., does not take place.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening on this issue that is so very important for all of Canada but which of course has a specific interest for my riding of Leeds—Grenville, as we are so heavily dependent upon three sectors, agriculture, tourism and manufacturing, all of which depend on the ability to cross the border and go back and forth with the flow of goods and people.

Of course with the tourism issues in your riding of Kingston and the Islands, Mr. Chair, the issues are very similar to those in my riding, with areas along the Thousand Islands that are dependent upon U.S. visitors, as well as the Rideau Lakes. I know that the Rideau Canal also runs into your riding, Mr. Speaker.

This issue is going to have a major economic impact on our country as well as the United States. I think we have to work with our colleagues and our friends on the other side.

I am a member of the border caucus. I recently attended a meeting in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, where we talked about this. It was one of the key issues we talked about that day. What we did hear from one of the American congressmen was that many of the congressmen in the middle states see this as an issue that only has to do with what is going on at the U.S.-Mexico border. They do not understand the economic impact that will hit their own country.

It is up to us and our government to reach out to our allies on the U.S. side to ensure that this does not happen. Only a few weeks ago I was in Alexander Bay, New York, with my provincial counterpart, Bob Runciman. We both spoke at a tourism conference of U.S. tourist operators in upstate New York. People from throughout New York were there. It was a governor's conference. They are very concerned about this issue. They are the people to whom we need to be reaching out to ensure that they are lobbying their government, because they are going to suffer from this as well.

I am very concerned about how our government has treated the relationship with the United States and how we got into this. Canada should have had special status on this issue long before we got to this final period of time when there is only a very short period to lobby on this. We need to use the short time that we have to ensure that our government lobbies and reaches out, but we also need to work with organizations within Canada.

I know that this issue has come to the forefront just in the past month or so, really, and now we are down to the critical time, with just seven days to go. This could be devastating to many people. I will talk about the tourism industry, one that I am very familiar with. Many people are employed in this industry, whether it be in lodging, food, service, transportation or in attractions. The livelihoods of many people depend upon it.

Of course in agriculture it will have an impact on moving back and forth. As for the industry in my riding, we have many plants that export many of their goods to the United States.

Really, I am imploring the government at this point to make sure that it lobbies on this, that it reaches out and builds allies. We have heard from the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, who has been working hard as one of our co-chairs on the border caucus. He has worked to ensure that we work together on this.

Now is the time. Time is short. That is why we are having this take note debate tonight. I appreciate the opportunity to get my comments on the record, but the last thing I will say is that now is the time. Let us reach out and solve this problem before it is too late.

Government Orders

• (2325)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his comments. They were very thoughtful, but I just want some clarification on one point. Perhaps he missed my speech earlier when I was going through the number of things the Canadian government has already done. I talked about how this initiative was announced on April 5, but the Deputy Prime Minister had already become active in March at a conference.

I mentioned a number of the consulates just a few minutes ago, and what they have done, but I will add to it just so I am not boring the House with the old information. The consulate in Seattle worked with the people in that area. Our consul general in Minneapolis is Kim Butler. I know Peter from our consulate in Washington, who informed the various territories, provinces and associations on the procedure for getting their points and their members, all of whom have great interest in this, into the United States. I just wanted to get that on the record.

The member mentioned the type of special status that we might have had at this point. I would be interested in hearing him outline how that might look and what the special status might be that he was thinking of, just to continue the debate.

Mr. Gord Brown: Mr. Speaker, before I answer that question, I want to talk about the fact that this is the first time we have had a debate in the House about this issue. The issue has gone on for a long time and now it has been brought forward. It was up to us to bring it forward.

I attended a border caucus meeting back in early September and not one single member of the government was at that meeting with our U.S. counterparts. It is disgraceful.

As for the question on special status, with the supposed special relationship we have with the United States, why was the government not there? Why was it not standing up for Canada?

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in routine proceedings, the Prime Minister of Canada or any minister of the Crown has the opportunity to bring forward issues to the House of Commons, day in and day out. Keep in mind that the Prime Minister wanted to address the democratic deficit.

Going back to the previous question, why the deafening silence on behalf of the Prime Minister of Canada on an initiative where his government could have done something? We hear Americans talking out loud about the consequences of ill-considered legislation. Why the absence of the Prime Minister of Canada and why did he not use the House as a springboard for that debate to engage all parliamentarians?

• (2330)

Mr. Gord Brown: Mr. Speaker, had we had an opportunity to debate this and get a motion on the floor a long time ago, we could have had that unanimity among parliamentarians in Canada. The reality is this goes back to the fact that the government uses Canada-U.S. relations as a pinata to be used for electoral purposes on an ongoing basis. It needs to stop, and this is the result of that type of activity. We need to see an end to it.

The Speaker: It being 11:30 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today under the provisions of Standing Order 53(1), the committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

(Government Business No. 18 reported)

The Speaker: It being 11:30 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:30 p.m.)

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